

## WHAT IS ISLAM?

A lecture by the roving ambassador of Islam  
Maulana Shah Abdul Aleem Siddiqui (RA)  
in Edmonton, Canada in 1939

*This is a transcription from an audio-cassette of the first part of the Lecture in English, given by His Eminence Maulana Shah Abdul Aleem Siddiqui Rehmatullah Alaih in Edmonton, Canada in 1939.*



*Maulana Shah Mohammed Abdul Aleem Siddiqui Al-Qaderi, peace ambassador from Pakistan here on a ten day visit, is greeted by secretary of the Alberta Moslem Association, N.W. Shaben (left) upon his arrival in Edmonton Canada*

Hazrat sahib was ad-Daa'ee al Kaamil (Accomplished Propagator of Islam) established himself as the first and foremost preacher and propagator of Islam in Canada as in other parts of the world. His whole lecture would fill a book. Only its introduction is presented here, so that at least we can get a glimpse of this spiritual luminary and benefit from his talk. In this lecture, Maulana Shah Abdul Aleem Siddiqui RA, who came from a very distinguished lineage stemming from Sayyidina Abu Bakr Siddiq (RA) , takes us through the science of the creations to lead to us to the creator. He just did not define what is Islam but elaboratively and intelligently makes us understand the concept of submission the will of Allah Almighty and hence Islam

*Alhamdu Lillahi-l-lazee hadaana lihaaza wama kunna linahtadiya lawtaa an hadaan-Allah wahdahu laa na'budu illa lyyah. Nashhadu an-laa Ilaaha Illah wa nash-hadu anna Sayyidana wa Habeebana wa shafee ana wa Maulana Muhammadan 'abduhu wa Rasuluh. Allazee la Shafee'a fil kawnayni siwaa. Amma ba'dufa inna a'azza min qaa ilil qattal. Wabi Qawlihi Yahtadil Muhtadun. Wa lza quri al gur'an Fastamiu lahu wa ansitu La'allakum turhamun. Auzu Billahi Minashataantrajeemi Innaddeena Indallahil Islam, Amantu Billahi Sadaqallahu maulanal Azeem. Wa Ballaga Rasuluhun-Nabiyyul Habeebul Kareem. Wa Nahnu ala Zalika minash-shahideena wa shaakireen wal Hamdu Lillahi Rabbil aalameen.*

Mr. President, the Imam, my sisters and brethren. It is really a great pleasure to me that I have an occasion of addressing you again in this very hall where I addressed you on the Eid day. Tonight, my subject is **"What is Islam?"** As far as the word Islam is concerned, it is an Arabic word and the people residing in Canada not knowing the Arabic language may not be knowing the exact meaning and the exact denotation of Islam. So, I'm requested to speak on: "What is Islam?"

My sisters and brethren; the beautiful panorama of the heavens and the earth which we see around us carries in its bosom the testimony that it is the creation of a Great Creator. The existence of order and design in the universe which modern science teaches us leads us to the belief in the existence of a Supreme Power and a Supreme Intelligence who is responsible for this complex but orderly design of a Supreme Being who brought it into existence and supplied with all that it needed for its life and growth. In the language of Holy Qur'an, of Rabb-ul- Aalameen.

The universe my sister and brethren as we know, as we know it in science is an organic whole all whose parts are beautifully and harmoniously interrelated. It is further a domain of Law in which every particle exists and moves in subjection to a prescribed and immutable course of law. Neither the huge planets that swim in the space nor the tiny particles of sand that lie scattered on the seashore can deviate even slightly from that course. **Their life is a life of a complete submission to the laws of nature in the language of science, and to the laws of God in the language of religion.** So really speaking their life is the life of Islam which means submission to Divine Commands. In other words, they are Muslims. The Holy Qur'an refers to this truth in the following words:

***Walahu aslama man-fissamaawaati wal ardh taw'an wa qarhan wa llayhi yurjaun.***

*"And to Him submits whatever is in the heaven and the earth willingly or unwillingly and unto Him they will be returned"*

My sisters and brethren; the sole exception to the general rule is man. He is unique in the whole domain of creation in as much as he possesses not only the faculty of reasoning but also his free will. This makes his course of action and the pattern of his behaviour unpredictable. You can predict the action of the sun because it functions under an immutable law and possesses no freedom to deviate from it, but you cannot do this same thing in the case of man. The activity of all the things of the universe is mechanical but not so that of man. He can choose his ends and he can prescribe the means. For that purpose, he relies on his reason. But in that way, he commits mistakes. Side by side he is achieving great things and ultimately lends himself in confusion.

My sisters and brethren, please pay attention. The same faculty, which is his asset, becomes the instrument of his undoing solely because of its wrong use. The human intellect can guide him only to certain limits because it works on the basis of known facts to discover the unknown things. It can serve efficiently to some extent in the domain of the physical reality but when it enters the realm of fundamental truth where the first requirement is at the possession of a comprehensive knowledge of

the past, the present and the future, it can give us only conjectures and inference. In its very nature it is incapable of discovering ultimate truths of life.

The human soul is however in dead earnest to know those ultimate truths because without them the real meaning of life remains unexplained and the true code of human endeavour remains unfixed. Science cannot supply us with that, because it deals only with the immediate physical reality; philosophy cannot give it because it works on postulates and inference. It is at this stage my sisters and brethren that the human soul cries for guidance from the great beyond of the great unknown. It yearns to have a torch, which might illuminate its path, and a guide who might supply the guidance based on sure and certain knowledge. Humanity needs such a sure and comprehensive guidance and the same Loving Creator who sustains us and the universe in the matter of physical needs has also taken it upon himself to supply this vital need.

Human history bears testimony to the fact that religion has existed since the beginning of life of humanity on this earth. This shows that the Beneficent God supplies guidance to mankind simultaneously with its creation so that it might not have to grope in the dark and might walk the way of the law in conformity with its nature. Those who are appointed by God to deliver that guidance are in the terminology of religion known as Prophets and Messengers and Apostles. They themselves received that guidance in the form of divine revelation and when they presented it to the people in a written form it was known as the scripture or revealed books. The contents of those scriptures have always been laws, which the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe had appointed for the right life of man.

The aim of guidance had always been to teach man to submit to the divine law which attitude is expressed in Arabic by the term Islam. Divine Guidance wants man to act and behave in accordance with the law of its true nature and free being even as the rest of the creation conforms to the laws of nature in a mechanical way. In one word we can say that the Divine Guidance wants man to be Muslim. The Holy Qur'an says:

*"The nature made by God in whom He has created man, there is no altering in Allah's creation. That is the right religion, but most men do not know".*

This guidance my sisters and brethren from Almighty God was not confined to one group or community but was sent to all nations and all races of the world. The blessing of God was bestowed universally as the Holy Qur'an reports:

***Wa In Min Ummatin Illa Khalaafeha Nazeer***

*"And there has not been a nation to whom a Warner was not sent"*

So, my sisters and brethren, history has preserved the names of some of them while the names and works of many others have now been forgotten by the people. Among those whose names are still remembered, most of you also may be knowing them are: Adam, Nuh, Ibrahim, Ismail, Ishaq, Yacoob, Musa and Isa, the last of the line was Muhammad Sallallahu Taala alaihi wa ala alihi wa as-habihi wabaaraka wa sallama wa ala Jamee-il anbiyaa-i wal mursaleen.

He, that is the great Prophet Muhammad **صلى الله عليه وسلم** appeared in the seventh century of the Christian era, called humanity back to the path of the former Prophets and presented to the world the

Holy Qur'an which contains the law taught by the former prophets in their perfect and most comprehensive form.

People had named the teachings of the previous teachers variously as Judaism, Christianity etc. The last Prophet reminded them of the real and original and meaningful name namely Islam. He declared in the words of the Holy Qur'an:

*Innaddeena Indallahil Islam.  
"Lo the religion with Allah to Islam"*

That is the surrender to His Will and Guidance. Then again Almighty Allah says:

*Millata Abeekum Ibrahim Hiwa sammakumul Muslimeen.  
"The faith of your father Ibrahim is yours. He has named you a Muslim"*

Again, Almighty Allah says and more emphatically says:

*Maa Kaana Ibrahimu Yahudiyyan wallaa Nasraaniyyan walaa Kin Kaana Haneefan Muslima.  
"Ibrahim was not a Jew nor yet a Christian but he was an upright man who surrendered to Allah. He was Muslim"*

The final Prophet that is the great Prophet Muhammad **صلى الله عليه وسلم** raised religion from the level of sectarianism and taught that the Divine Religion wherever found and whomsoever preached had always been the faith namely Islam which as I have already emphasized twice **means submission to and conformity with the laws appointed by Almighty God.**

I certainly hope that this small talk has helped you all to understand the religion of the Almighty Allah, which is Islam. I pray to the lord of all the universes that the Almighty help us all to understand this religion of peace. May Allah Almighty bless us all with guidance to be steadfast in the right path that leads to his mercy. May the light of religion continue to illuminate this world until the last day (Ameen)

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**Some prominent members and office-bearers of the then King Farouk -el-Awwal Royal Society of the Muslim Women of Egypt photographed with His Eminence Maulana Muhammad Abdul Aleem Siddique Al Qaderi (centre) during his lecture tour of Egypt in 1949.**