

## How should a British Muslim lead a morally good life?

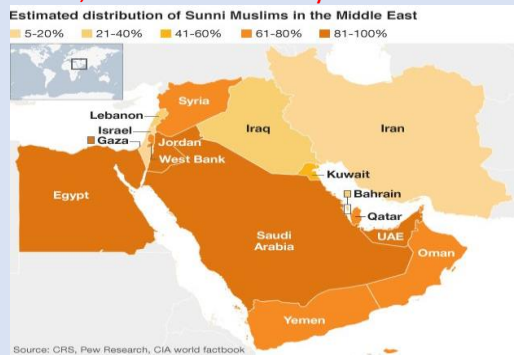
Within Islam, there are two main denominations, called Sunni and Shi'a. All Muslims share some key beliefs. However, some beliefs vary depending on the denomination a Muslim belongs to.

Why did the divide between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims happen?

Sunni and Shi'a Muslims agree on the basic principles of Islam, such as believing in one God and the importance of the prophets. They also share the same holy book - the Qur'an.

The reason there has been a split into different branches is due to differences in belief about who was the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad as leader of the Muslim community after his death.

Many Muslims believed that Abu-Bakr, the Prophet's closest companion would be the first Caliph (which means 'deputy to God's Prophet'). This is the Sunni viewpoint. A minority believed that Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law should lead the community. These Muslims came to be known as Shi'a, which means 'Party of Ali'



### Key terms

**Benevolent** – kind.

**Denomination** – Different sub groups within one religion.

**Discrimination** – to act on a prejudice. If you are prejudiced against a certain group of people, and treat them differently because of your beliefs, this is called discrimination.

**Genesis** - The first book of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) describing the origins of humanity and humans' relationship with God.

**Haram** – Forbidden.

**Immigration** – The act of coming to live in another country.

**Jihad**: a struggle against evil, this may be an inward, personal struggle or an outward, collective struggle.

**Greater jihad**: the personal inward struggle of all Muslims to live in line with the teaching of their faith.

**Lesser jihad**: the outward struggle to defend one's faith, family and country from threat.

**Liturgical** – Following the word of the Bible regularly through prayer and worship in church.

**Monotheistic** – Belief in one God.

**Nicene Creed** – A set of beliefs that ALL Christians have.

**Omniscient** – All knowing

**Omnipotent** – All powerful.

**Prejudice** - to prejudge someone because of the way they look, where they come from, their religion etc. Prejudice is a way of thinking about people.

**Protestantism** as a whole only affirms 2 sacraments

**Segregation** – The act of setting someone apart from others. To separate people.

**Race and Religious Hatred Act 2006** – The law that makes it illegal to discriminate against someone in the UK because of who they are, their religion or where they come from.

**Rakat** - set sequence of actions and prayers (standing, bowing, prostrating, kneeling). They turn to the left and right to show respect to the angels.

### The five roots of 'Usul al-Din in Shi'a Islam

1. Tawhid means that God is one; God is not made up of different persons.
2. Prophethood means accepting that Muhammad is God's last prophet, and that God's revelations through him are true.
3. God is just and wise, cannot do wrong, and holds humans accountable for their actions.
4. The Imamate means accepting that the twelve Imams are the leaders of Islam and guard the truth of the religion without error.
5. The Resurrection on The Day of Judgement, where everyone is brought back to life and questioned on their good and bad deeds.

The Five Pillars of Islam are an important part of Muslim life. They are five things that a Muslim must do so they can live a good and responsible life. They include:

The declaration of faith (Shahada)

Praying five times a day (Salat)

Giving money to charity (Zakah)

Fasting during the month of Ramadan (Sawm)

A pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in a lifetime (Hajj)



## Greater jihad

**Greater jihad** is about making the effort to be a good Muslim through a personal struggle to improve spiritually. It is a duty and an act of worship.

To do this Muslims should:

- follow the **Five Pillars of Islam**
- forgive others
- work for social justice
- study the Qur'an
- help those in need
- avoid negative qualities, e.g. greed
- avoid temptations, e.g. alcohol

**“No bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another.” Qur'an 35:18**

This quote shows that greater jihad is a personal struggle. A believer is individually responsible for being a good Muslim.

**Lesser jihad** is about defending Islam from threat. Some people still take up arms against anybody they see as an enemy of Islam.

However, many Muslims believe that lesser jihad is of less relevance today than in the past, when Muslims were being **persecuted**.

There are rules about how lesser jihad can be carried out:

- it must be in defence of Allah
- no harm must be done
- peace must be restored
- mercy must be shown

Saladin is a good example of this. He is the most famous leader of the jihad against the Christians in the twelfth century. This is partly because of his personality. He was thought of as generous and deeply religious. After recapturing Jerusalem, he allowed the Christians and Jews to leave even though when the Christians had captured it, they murdered everyone who was not Christian. Islam teaches that lesser jihad can never be used to justify terrorist attacks.

Near Neighbours is a charity which brings people together of different religions in mixed communities. They aim to improve relationships and work together on projects to transform communities.

Near Neighbours was started by Christians, but they work with people of all religions and of no religions. Christians believe that everyone is equal and that they should always help each other out. The Bible tells them that they should 'Treat others as you want to be treated', and Near Neighbours tries to follow this teaching. Members of The Saffron Neighbourhood Management Board and Hope Hamilton Church decided to work together to bring harmony within their communities. They decided that the first thing they should do was to hold a party. It was Christmas time and although not all religions celebrate Christmas, they decided to hold a Christmas party and make everyone welcome to it. Near Neighbours gave them £1000 to decorate the hall, create posters advertising the event and to provide food and drink. The party was held in the Christian Church Hall, but they made sure that everyone was welcome. Many people of different religions attended and the party was very successful. These parties encouraged people of different religions to talk to each other and to find common interests. The communities realised that they all wanted to same thing: For the people in the Saffron and Hamilton to get on with each other / For all racist and prejudice behaviour to end / They all knew that to achieve these things, they must work together and help each other out / People began to organise other events themselves for everyone to attend. They used many local facilities to hold events. They organised a party for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee / A sporting event to celebrate the London Olympics / Mother and toddler groups / Youth clubs / Football matches / Social groups for older people. They have also welcomed each other to the different religious buildings within their communities: different Christian churches, a Mosque and Hindu Temple. They have taught each other about their religious beliefs to try to encourage an understanding. These sessions have been very popular as the local people have been very keen to learn about each other's religions.



Many young Muslims in Britain can find it difficult to practice their religion. Many foods here are forbidden under Muslim law as is alcohol. This can make it difficult for young Muslims when they go out with their white British friends. Fasting at Ramadan can make it difficult to play sports or sit exams. Many schools have banned the hijab (head scarf) that some Muslim women choose to wear. Muslims are required to pray 5 times a day, what happens when they are in work? The act or Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) is difficult for older Muslims as Mecca is far away and the travel can be expensive.