

## BASIC RELIGIOUS/MORAL ORIENTATION FOR NEW OVERSEAS FACULTY

Islam is a collectivist faith, and all Moslems are expected to abide by its tenets. As non-Moslems in an Islamic country, we are obviously expected to respect Moslem religion. Kuwait is an Islamic country, not a secular state; and, as such, the faith is central to society.

As an Arab bilingual school and an institution, which comes under Ministry of Education regulations, we feel that it is important to outline certain procedures, which should be followed. In general, we try to avoid offending Arab or Islamic sensibilities. These procedures are outlined below. While we try to include here the salient points, it is impossible to mention everything. Thus, common sense will have to be used, and, should you have a question about the suitability of a topic, it is advisable to seek advice from the administrator.

### Present Guidelines

1. There should be no references to "Israel" in any materials or statements.
2. The sea between Iran and the Gulf should be called "Arabian" rather than Persian Gulf.
3. It is not permitted to write negatively about anyone.
4. Discussion of romantic relationships is unacceptable, as is teenage dating.

### Introduction

The first thing one should know and clearly understand about Islam is what the word "Islam" means by itself. It means the total submission to the will of God, i.e. Allah.

### Basic Overview

Islam is regarded as the completion of God's message to mankind. The Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon Him) is thus seen as the final of Allah's messengers. He received the message from God to spread His word. He carried the message to the people living in the Arabian Peninsula who were at this time pagans who worshipped statues and fought violent wars.

### The Quran, Bible and Torah

There are numerous connections between the three major religions which sprang from the Middle East. For example, many prophets, such as Abraham [Ibrahim] or Moses [Musa], are mentioned in the three books. Jesus Christ [Essa] is recognized in Islam as an important prophet. There is much time also devoted to his mother Mary [Meriam]. In the Koran, it is stated that Jesus was taken to heaven and will return one day to spread justice in the world. All three religions recognize the central tenet, that of the belief in one God.

#### 1. Basis of Islam

- \* Al Shahadatan - There is but one God and Mohammed is His last Prophet.
- \* Belief in God and his Angels, Holy Books, Prophets and the Last Day.
- \* To pray 5 times in a day at set times.
- \* To fast during the Holy Month of Ramadan.
- \* Zakat - To give 2.5% of savings in alms to the poor (yearly).
- \* To go when one is in good health and can afford it, on pilgrimage to Holy Mecca.

#### 2. Islam as a Complete Way of Life

Islam provides guidance in all aspects of life, viz. individual, social, material, moral, economic, political, legal and cultural.

**3. World Culture**

Islam embraces many diverse ethnic and racial groups in one Moslem family. People from Indonesia to the US are brothers in Islam.

**4. Prophet Mohammed**

Prophet Mohammed was born in Mecca in The Arabian Peninsula. His family were nobles. His grandfather had been the chief of the "Kuraish Tribe." His father died four months before he was born, while his mother died when he was six years old. His grandfather and then his uncle looked after him. He was well known from an early age for his outstanding honesty.

Prophet Mohammed suffered like all other prophets when he started spreading the message of Allah. His own tribe was aggressive toward him, until he convinced them of the truth of Islam.

**5. Dress**

According to religious tradition, Moslem women must wear long, full sleeved dresses and cover their heads, It is however accepted in modern society to wear short/long sleeved dresses below the knees without any head cover.

**6. Greetings**

Some women do not shake hands with men and vice versa. It is wise for men not to outstretch your hand first. The Moslem woman is highly respected in society and care should be taken not to insult her.

**7. Communications**

Moslems greet each other by saying "Salaam Alaikum" - Peace be upon you. But one can greet by saying "Good morning or Hello." The show of one's affections in public is not accepted, for example kissing or hugging between men and women or even husband and wife.

**8. Taking Photographs**

Be careful not to take any photographs of strangers on the streets, especially women. It is prohibited to take pictures without permission.

**9. Alcohol & Narcotics**

Alcohol and drugs are prohibited, and violators could be prosecuted for possession of either of them.

**10. A'than**

It is a call for prayer and is heard five times a day. Moslems can pray anywhere but must face the holy city of Mecca.

**11. Sitting Position**

It is not thought proper form to sit with your heels facing another person. This is regarded as a rude gesture and deeply insulting.

**12. Raising One's Voice in Anger**

It is felt to be bad form for any Moslem to raise their voice against another individual. Islam stresses "calm" and "patience" as important virtues.

**13. Holy Month of Ramadan**

During the Holy Month, Moslems fast during the hours of daylight. Children as young as eight or nine may fast. No food nor water may be consumed. This is to encourage Moslems to reflect

upon the needs of the poor who often have to go without food or water. Smoking or sexual contact is normally regarded as part of the fast. A fast can be violated if an individual loses their temper or behaves in a bad way. Thus, at this time it is important to be thoughtful as an educator to assist students to be calm. During this month, families may not sleep before dawn especially in the last 10 nights which are spent in prayers. "Fatour" or Ramadan breakfast is normally eaten after sunset. "Sahour" is the last meal before sunrise. During this month it is important to support Moslem colleagues and understand that they may have only caught a few hours sleep prior to the school day.

Eating or drinking in public is a criminal offense during Ramadan. Following Ramadan is the celebration of Eid Al Fitr (meaning end of fasting).

**Eid Al Adha** - 70 days after Eid Al Fitr, Moslems celebrate Eid Al Adha. This is the feast which recalls Abraham's (Ebrahim) sacrifice of a sheep in place of his son as requested by Allah.

At BBS, we do not celebrate Christian feasts such as Christmas or Easter. There should be no bulletin boards design which relate to these feasts. The making of Christmas or Easter cards in school is not allowed. The same rule applies to feasts such as "Halloween."

#### 14. **Physical Contact**

At BBS, it is forbidden to use any form of physical abuse of children. This includes slapping, ear pulling, shoving or wrapping knuckles with rulers, etc. It is also forbidden for adults to sit children upon knees or to adjust children's clothing. It is not permitted for faculty to embrace children particularly of the opposite sex.

The infliction of physical abuse is treated as one of the most serious cases in school policy, and all faculty are cautioned to abide strictly to it.

#### 15. **Music**

Boys and girls should not dance together. Disco dancing for example is forbidden.

#### 16. **Dramas/Productions**

Themes for plays should be sensitive to the tenets of Islam. It is wise to show a preliminary outline of a play you wish to produce to the Administrator at the earliest stage. All plays must be authorized by the School Administration and the Ministry of Education in Kuwait.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RAMADAN

"O ye who believe  
Fasting is prescribed to you

As it was prescribed To those  
before you that ye may  
(learn) self-restraint"  
(verse 183, Surat Al Baqarah)

Fasting (Saum) is one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith, the other four being Belief in the oneness of God (Iman), Prayer (Salat), Giving of alms (Zakat) and Pilgrimage (Haj).

The act of fasting was emphasized upon by the Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him) as one that inculcated spiritual discipline.

Moslems are required to fast during the full 29 or 30 days of the month of Ramadan of the Moslem calendar and the procedure for it, as described in the Holy Quran, is:

"eat and drink until the white thread of dawn appears to you  
distinct from its black thread;  
then keep your fast till the night appears."  
(Verse 187, Surat Al Baqarah)

The month of Ramadan was selected presumably because it is in this month that the Holy Quran was revealed to the Prophet of Islam for guidance of his followers. The first revelation occurred on the Lailat al Qadr or "the night of power" on the twenty seventh day of Ramadan.

"The night of Power is better than a thousand months - Therein  
come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah's permission,  
on every errand:  
Peace! This is until the rise of morn."

Ramadan constitutes a period of atonement and forgiveness. It is said that during Ramadan, the gates of heaven are opened and the gates of hell closed and the devil is put in chains. This is a reflection of the belief that whoever fasts during Ramadan faithfully and fulfills his religious obligations with pure intentions obtains remission of his sins.

Fasting throughout the 29 or 30 days is obligatory upon every Moslem, except for the young, the aged and sick, for nursing and pregnant women and for travelers on long journeys. However, for able-bodied adults, days missed to any of the above reasons have to be compensated for later.

Fasting must be begun each day with the renewal of the intention (Niyya). The fast is broken or invalidated upon "the entering into the body of any material substances in, so far as it is done consciously and is preventable." For the duration of the day long fast, the inhaling of tobacco, food and drink is prohibited, so is sex and intoxication.

There is, however, more to fasting than these afore-stated observances.

Fasting is one-half of faith, said the Holy Prophet and as such, over and above abstention from food, drink and other physical needs, it calls for a purification of the mind from all evil thoughts and actions and demands that one exercises a conscious control over one's senses and manner to stay away from sin and wrong doing.

The believer must avoid thinking of anything reprehensible and anything that might distract him from the remembrance of God.

According to Prophet Mohammed, five things annul the fast:

Lying, back-biting, slander, a false oath and a glance of passion. Also to be avoided are indecent or dishonest talk and hostile and hypocritical behavior. One must also not listen to discussion of evil because what must not be said also must not be heard.

In other words it is not only necessary to observe a fast of the body but that of the tongue as well.

The fast, in calling for the exercise of patience, serves to inculcate in one the virtues of indurance, tolerance and respect for fellow human beings. As such, during fasting one discovers community feelings and comprehends better one's role in society.

In effect, the fast begins at Sahar; the time just before dawn, when one is permitted to eat and drink and, as soon as light trickles from the east, is required to stop and pray to God to grant one perseverance and determination to complete the fast without breaking it both physically and mentally.

The fast culminates at sunset and the act of breaking it is known as Iftar. At this time, again, the believer offers a prayer of gratitude to the Almighty for having enabled him to conduct himself faithfully through the day.

The culmination of the month of Ramadan is celebrated on the first day of the following month (Shawwal) by Moslems all over the world and the festival is known as Eid-al-Fitr.

The essence and spirit of fasting can thus be described as self-denial and self-sacrifice, wherein the good Moslem seeks the pleasure of God Almighty and at the same time learns to understand the needs of his fellow human beings and to value the blessings of Allah.

## KUWAIT NATIONAL ANTHEM

*Watanil Kuwait Salemta lil Majdy  
Wa Ala Jabinika Taliul Sa'dy  
Watanil Kuwait – Watanil Kuwait  
Watanil Kuwait Salemta lil Majdy*

*Ya Mahda A'bail Ulla Katabu  
Sifral Khuludy Fnadati Sha'bu  
Allahu Akbaru innahum Arabu  
Talaat Kwakibu Janatil Khuldy*

*Watanil Kuwait Salemta lil Majdy  
Wa Ala Jabinika Taliul Sa'dy  
Watanil Kuwait – Watanil Kuwait  
Watanil Kuwait Salemta lil Majdy*

### **Translation**

*May Kuwait be blessed  
May Kuwait be blessed  
Our Kuwait be blessed*

*The land of our ancestors  
Oh! Mighty God – they are Arabs  
Heaven is where they lie*

*May Kuwait be blessed  
May Kuwait be blessed  
Our Kuwait be blessed*