



Leadership Training for Imams

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The expansion of Islamic centers and Masjids has raised serious concerns regarding the quality of educational services being rendered. Many Islamic centers having inadequate resources are faced with the challenge of balancing the quality of Islamic education, principles and teachings of the Holy Quran. Essential in this endeavor is the professional growth of Muslim leaders and Imams, who are capable of implementing the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SWA) at all levels.

Islam provides explicit guidelines for all Muslims to pursue in all walks of life. The guidance it gives is far-reaching and includes all aspects of life. Islam reminds man of the purpose of life on earth, and his duties and obligations towards himself, his family his community, his fellow human beings and his Creator. Man is given essential guidelines about a purposeful life and then he is left with the challenge of human existence before him so that he might put these high principles into practice.

The five pillars of Islam is the term given to the fundamental aspects of Islam. These five pillars of Islam are the most main obligations of a Muslim under Sharia law, and which committed all Muslims will perform faithfully, because they are essential foundation of Islam.

### **The Five Pillars of Islam**

According to Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five\\_Pillars\\_of\\_Islam](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Pillars_of_Islam).

Allah expects all Muslims to put into practice what they believe in. In Islam there are five pillars, namely:

1. Creed (Shahada): The verbal promise and pledge that there is only One God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, is considered to be the Doctrine of Islam.



2. Prayers (Salat): The performance of the five daily prayers is required of Muslims.
3. Fasting (Saum): Fasting is total abstinence from food, liquids and intimate relations (between married couples) from dawn to sunset during the entire month of Ramadan.
4. Purifying Tax (Zakat): This is an annual payment of a certain percentage of a Muslim's property which is distributed among the poor or other rightful beneficiaries.
5. Pilgrimage (Hajj): The performance of pilgrimage to Makkah is required once in a life time if means are available. Hajj is in part in memory of the trials and tribulations of Prophet Abraham, his wife Hajra and his eldest son prophet Ishmael.

### **Islam as a Growing Religion**

Islam is a religion of peace and harmony. Further it is not just a religion it is the way of life. According to Wikipedia the free encyclopedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam>. Islam is a monotheistic faith and the world's second-largest religion. In Arabic, Islam means "submission" and is described as a Din, meaning "way of life" and/or "religion." Etymologically, it is derived from the same root as, for example, Salam meaning "peace" (also a common salutation). A more precise translation of the word Islam would be the serenity that is created by submission. The word Muslim is also related to the word Islam and means "one who surrenders" or "submits" to God.



Spreading of Islam based on the percentages published in the 2003 CIA factbook, Islam is the second largest religion in the world. According to the World Network of Religious Futurists (<http://www.wnrf.org/news/trends.html>), the U.S. Center for World Mission ([http://www.religioustolerance.org/growth\\_isl\\_chr.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/growth_isl_chr.htm)), and the controversial Samuel Huntington, Islam is growing faster numerically than any other religion. It is a matter of great controversy whether this is due in large part to the higher birth rates in many Islamic countries, or whether a high conversion rate may also be a factor.

The Muslim population today comprises over 1.3 billion people; estimates of Islam by country based on US State Department figures yield a total of 1.48 billion, 22.82% of the world's population. However, only 18% of Muslims live in the Arab world; a fifth is found in Sub-Saharan Africa, about 30% in the Indian sub-continental region of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, and the world's largest single Muslim community (within the bounds of one nation) is in Indonesia. There are also considerable Muslim populations in China, Europe (especially in the Mediterranean countries), Central Asia, and Russia. There are around 5 million Muslims in North America. The world population is growing at about 1.10% per year, but the percentage of Muslim population is increasing by 1.4% per year, mostly due to enormous birth rate of African and Asian. Most recently birth rates in many Muslim countries have begun to decline, although more slowly than in other nations, which also may be a cause.

## **Islamic Law**

Muslims in Islamic societies have conventionally viewed Islamic law as necessary to their religious viewpoint. For Muslims living in united states sharia ceases to be significant



as law, but remains a basis of personal ethics (for example, the avoidance of pork and alcohol, and the use of Sharia-compliant banking services). The Qur'an is the primary source of Islamic jurisprudence; the second is the Sunnah (the practices of the Prophet (SWA), as narrated in reports of his life). The Sunnah is not itself a text like the Qur'an, but is extracted by examination of the Hadith (Arabic for "report") texts, which include narrations of the Prophet's sayings, deeds, and actions of his companions he approved and respected

### **Religious Leaders and Imams**

The Imams who are the religious leaders of the Muslim community and who are conversant about the guiding principle and rules of Islam are best suited to educate the Muslims in their community, also to standardize and safeguard the religious affairs in their Muslim community. To meet the challenges of the 21st century and to live in serenity and synchronization with the larger community it is necessary to define our identity, our role and our accountability. As Muslims we have to construct trust and mutual admiration with all the main authorities through communication, exchange of ideas in sequence, and common adjustment. It is also essential to legalize and preserve the religious matters. Therefore these religious leaders should form an Islamic council in their communities.

Religious leaders and Imams should be the permanent members of the Islamic council. The Islamic council members should comprise of prominent doctors, engineers and other reputable members of the society. These are persons of influence in the society, and should work in collaboration on developing topics to enable them to raise public awareness about developmental goals and to facilitate greater participation of the community at large in organizational activities. There should be biweekly or monthly meetings and all council



members should be encouraged to attend the meetings on a regular basis and to contribute to the best of their capability to serve the community. Imams should advise and persuade Muslims to amalgamate. They should make an effort to establish new laws and rules for the Muslim community. Therefore a special effort should be made to plan such councils. All Muslims should work together by uniting themselves and working hand in hand with mutual respect, open-mindedness and collaboration in promoting the cause of Allah.

### **The Role of the Imams**

The role of Imam is to be a leader. The Imam according to a great deal of research, states that the first trait an Imam should possess is of a servant leader and the second role as a guardian leader.

“The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. He or she is sharply different from the person who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. For such it will be a later choice to serve – after leadership is established. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.

The difference manifest itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least, will they not be further deprived?”

Taken from the *Servant As Leader* published by Robert Greenleaf in 1970.

In fact, these two roles are interchangeable. In order to be a servant leader you have to be a guardian leader. Also to serve Allah a Muslim leader is to act in agreement with the



injunctions of Allah and his Prophet (SAW), and must build up a strong moral character and maintain a strong code of conduct.

An Imam is responsible for teaching the faith and the laws of Allah. He is the man of faith. He has to be strong in leadership and strong in prayer. The Imam is to be strong in character and morally responsible to the Muslim community.

An Imam is responsible to his people in the areas of worship and realism. A mentor to the adults and children and minister of Education and Leadership development, and be a role model to the supporters and the other Muslims.

The current prayers that are being offered by most mosques should elaborate the need to recover spiritual discipline of prayer pressing is fundamental. This is because the prayer is the "chief Exercise of the faith". We need to revitalize prayer in our personal and cooperative lives. This is why the Imam is so important to the Muslim community. Imam has to be strong and endorse good leadership skills. In Islam leadership is agreeable obedience to Allah as leadership in Islam is a trust.

## **Code of Ethics for Imam's**

This code of ethics focuses on religious beliefs and core values:

### **Honesty**

Embrace truthfulness, fairness, with all others with whom they interact.

### **Integrity**

Implement a code of behavior which reflects Islamic values, beliefs and always fulfill any commitment, promise and obligations made to the Muslim community.

### **Respect**

Treat all others regardless of their background with regard for their value as human beings and to speak up against any discrimination and disrespect that they encounter.

### **Responsibility**

Become responsible and accountable for actions and all consequences that might arise from all decisions.

### **Empathy**

Strive to understand the feelings, thoughts and emotions of others in order to show compassion and fairness to all.

### **Fairness**

To always hear every person's perspective and treat everyone with respect.

## **Imam Training protocol and manuals**

The Imam training program will expand and enhance the knowledge of Imams, as persons of authority in the community, to expand topics to allow them to raise community involvement about developmental goals and facilitate greater contribution of the people in developing activities.

Imams should be able to engage in and facilitate important issues by giving advice and recommendations to the members of the community and also provide information to various government agencies through out the United States.



Imams being religious leaders should be knowledgeable about Islamic laws and must be able to represent and give advice and be well-merited in answering questions of fiqh and be comfortable with seeking directive from highly regarded Islamic centers and establishment in the Muslim world.

## **Core Competencies for Imam's**

### **Leadership**

The word "Leadership" covers a very broad landscape. For the past few decades this term has been continuously evolving and has led researchers to study many theories of leadership. At present, the leadership literature consists of thousands of studies on the various trait and behavioral theory perspectives, attribution leadership perspectives, situational contingency perspectives, including charismatic approaches to studying leadership (Bass, 1990).

According to (Kelly, 2000), the term leadership has become very difficult to define, simply because it has already been defined previously in so many different ways.

The seven pillars of leadership character:

- **Caring**
- **Courage**
- **Honesty**
- **Integrity**
- **Responsibility**
- **Loyalty**
- **Fairness**

Servant-leadership encourages collaboration, trust, foresight, listening, and the ethical use of power and empowerment. Imam training should focus on developing leadership ability and fostering leadership qualities. The leadership training will involve creating leadership workshops centered on topics like conflict resolution, cultural diversity, and inter-faith communication. This training should be on-going and should involve all members of the Muslim community.

### **Values and Ethics**

In this new millennium Imam's will be facing many obstacles and challenges which require a greater understanding of Islamic values and ethics. It is necessary to provide opportunities for intercultural and international communication in order to eliminate the prevailing stereotypes about various eastern cultures like in the Middle East and Pakistan. Imams will educate the Muslim community about the importance of values and ethics and the vital role they play in our lives. They will hold regular discussions on cultural values and the challenges we as a global community face due to the differences in cultural and religious values.

### **Information and Communication**

It is essential for leaders to communicate effectively and pass along accurate information. Imam leadership training will enhance communication between the leaders of the Muslim community and leaders from other religions. It will also foster an environment welcoming change, ideas and promoting tolerance. Imams will utilize the concepts from the theories of learning and instructional design to develop material that has a wide target audience and appeals to all of the Muslim community.



## **Planning and Decision Making**

Imam training will focus on establishing councils, meeting deadlines, conducting research, editing, materials which will be published. Imam should act as "change agents" for the 21st century and evolve into transformational leaders. As leaders in the community it is to extremely important to be decisive and assess what others in the community are saying.

## **Conclusion**

This research explores the necessity of providing Imam training for all future religious leaders in the community. This research analyzed the significant impact religious leaders have in a community. Developing leadership training and professional development for Imam's will result in improved communication and understanding of Islamic values and way of life. It is essential to provide Imam's with manuals, assessment tools, leadership workshops so they are able to engage with scholars from other religions and organizations. Leadership training for Imams will improve intercultural dialogue and bridge the gap that exists among Islamic leaders and the greater community.

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