



Bismillah-ir Rahman-ir Raheem

[In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful]

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Cultural Sensitivity in the Context of the Muslim Religion

1.0 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- 1.1 Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly Resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is in full conformance to Islamic culture, which Prophet Muhammad established in the Holy Qur'an.
- 1.2 All of the 30 Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights refer to upholding of human dignity and human rights, regardless of whichever country people may be living in.
- 1.3 The Islamic culture introduced those human rights more than 1,400 years ago, when much of the world was unaware of any such right.

2.0 Islamic Culture is Driven by Scripture Laws

- 2.1 The Holy Qur'an is the principal religious Ordinance which drives the universal law and order culture in Islam. Subsidiary regulatory matters are compiled in books called Hadith.
- 2.2 The Hadith is compilation of actual practices of Prophet Muhammad and his exemplary actions and his answers to pertinent questions. People of Islamic faith are perhaps better known as Muslims.
- 2.3 In Islamic jurisprudence, the Hadith is used as precedence in reaching judgement on matters, which Prophet Muhammad practically demonstrated, by either allowing or disallowing activities, or he made public statements on complex issues.
- 2.4 The Qur'an states at 1:37 *"And this Qur'an is not such as could be forged by those besides God, but it is a verification of that which is before it and a clear explanation of the Book, there is no doubt in it, from the Lord of the worlds."*

3.0 Mosques

- 3.1 Mosques are the most sacred places in Islam. All mosques must face the Ka'ba in Mecca, the hub of Muslims' worship. The Ka'ba was the first altar for worshipping, built by Adam and Eve.
- 3.2 It was repaired and rebuilt by Prophet Abraham with the help of his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. The Ka'ba was refurbished under Prophet Muhammad's directives.
- 3.3 The Qur'an states at 3:95 *"Certainly the first house appointed for men is the one at Mecca, blessed and a guidance for the nations."*

4.0 Abraham's Significance

- 4.1 Judaism, Christianity and Islam have lots of commonalities in their communities' cultures, as these three major religions are known as Semitic religious communities.
- 4.2 Since these communities descended directly from the line of Abraham who was the patriarch of humanity, these communities are also better known as the Abrahamic religions.
- 4.3 The Qur'an states at 2:132 *"And the same did Abraham enjoin on his sons, and (so did) Jacob: O my sons, surely God has chosen for you (this) religion, so die not unless you are submitting ones."*

5.0 Salutation for Muslims

- 5.1 The universal salutation for all Muslims is "Assalaamu'Alaikum" which means "Peace upon you." The immediate response is "Wailaikum-assalaam" which means "and peace upon you also."
- 5.2 Regardless of political, language or racial differences amongst societies, the universal Muslim culture is based on a foundation of peace.

6.0 Acquiring knowledge

- 6.1 Muslims are required to seek knowledge to the extent possible. The very first verses of the Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad over 1,500 years ago, started off with a Divine Command in the Holy Qur'an at 96: 1 -19 *"Read in the name of thy Lord Who creates - Creates man from a clot. Read and thy Lord is most generous, Who taught by the pen. Taught man what he knew not....").*
- 6.2 In extreme cases, when parents have just a son and a daughter; and they do not have the means of educating both, preference must always go to the daughter. This is so because the mother is always the child's first teacher and an educated mother is a better mother.
- 6.3 Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is consistent with the Qur'an.

7.0 Five pillars of Islam

- 7.1 Islam has five pillars or principles that bind and support the religion's structure. These are in the sequence of (1st) Acceptance of One God (2nd) Performing prayer - 5 times daily (3rd) Charity (4th) Fasting and (5th) Performing pilgrimage to Mecca.

8.0 Fasting

- 8.1 Fasting is the fourth pillar in the lunar 9th month of Ramadan, in Muslim calendar year. Fasting is from before sunrise till after sunset.
- 8.2 Muslims who are in good health must fast. Very old people, sick people and those in constant care of medication or attention are exempted. Pregnant or nursing women with babies are also exempted, but must make up for missed fasts once back in good health. Very young children are not required to fast.
- 8.3 Fasting in a religious context is a technique of seeking closer proximity to God. The Jews were known to observe fasts on several fixed days in Jewish calendar, such as Yom Kippur. All early prophets like Jacob, Moses, Solomon, David all fasted. Jesus is said to have fasted forty days and nights before his final entry into Jerusalem.
- 8.4 Fasting is like a shield of protection. Muslims' fasting may be graded into material, mental and spiritual levels.

- 8.5 The first level "material fast" is where one abstains from food, drink and sexual intimacy.
- 8.6 The second level "mental fast" is of the senses and the tongue, whereby one is to avoid looking at or hearing anything which might turn the attention to material things, and where the fasting person refrains from backbiting and hostile language.
- 8.7 The third and highest grade of fasting is the "fast of the soul," where the above practices are perfected by an abstinence from any thought which might impair one's awareness of God's presence. One of the main features about fasting is the levelling-off effect.
- 8.8 Fasting aligns rich people having abundance of resources with poor people who do not have any resources. This way all the people get to experience and feel what the poor and hungry have to go through in their daily routine.
- 8.9 Fasting also brings about a sense of detachment of moving away from vices, as a test of the peoples' integrity in honesty and voluntary compliance. Once Muslims pass this test, then those Muslims must make up their minds to be improved people for the next 11 months.
- 8.10 The Qur'an states at 2:183 *"O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may guard against evil."*

9.0 Birth

- 9.1 Muslims are required to accept birth of a son or a daughter with equal joy. Children to both Muslim parents are naturally Muslims.
- 9.2 Boys and girls are equal. Articles 1-3, 13-15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are consistent with the Qur'an.
- 9.3 Birth of a child must be followed by a thanks giving sacrificial ceremony, called "Aqiqa." A son requires the parents to slaughter two goats or sheep and a daughter requires a single goat or sheep. The meat may either be distributed to the poor or it may be used in a thanks-giving religious function held at home.
- 9.4 Two animals are required for a son because he becomes the continuation of that family; whereas a single animal is required for a daughter, as later in her life, she will be married off to a Muslim person in another family and inherit a new family status.

10.0 Personal hygiene

- 10.1 Personal cleanliness is required five times a day, in alignment with preparation for prayer. This is called "Wudzu" and it is separate practice from daily shower or bathing every man or women is required to perform. Muslims place a lot of attention to personal hygiene and people are recommended to use perfume to overcome body odours, especially in extreme climatic conditions.
- 10.2 The Qur'an expressly states at 5:6 *"O you who believe, when you rise up for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads, and wash your feet up to the ankles."*

11.0 Foods and Drinks

- 11.1 All fruits, foods and drinks are permitted for Muslims except the following: The flesh or any part of any kind of pig; the flesh of any other animal that died other than being correctly slaughtered as prescribed "Halal."
- 11.2 Any form of beverage that intoxicates a person or brings about alteration in the person's mind, except what is medicinal preparation. Islam therefore draws

conclusion that Muslims, through religious jurisprudence, are not permitted to be intoxicated as social enjoyment.

- 11.3 The Qur'an states at 2:173 *"He has forbidden you only what dies of itself, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that over which any other name than that of God has been invoked."*
- 11.4 All consumptions of intoxicant drinks are forbidden to Muslims.
- 11.5 The Qur'an also states at 5:91 *"The devil desires only to create enmity and hatred among you by means of intoxicants and games of chance... and keep you back from remembrance of God."*

12.0 Pre-marital Sex

- 12.1 Muslims are not permitted pre-marital sex. There is no exception.
- 12.2 The Qur'an states at 17:32 *"And go not nigh to fornication: surely it is an obscenity. And evil is the way."*

13.0 Homosexuality

- 13.1 Homosexuality is not permitted for Muslims. There is no exception.
- 13.2 The Qur'an states at 27: 55 *"Will you come to men lustfully rather than women? Nay, you are a people who act ignorantly."*

14.0 Prostitution

- 14.1 Both prostitution and any income derived from prostitution are not permitted for Muslims. There is no exception.
- 14.2 The Qur'an states at 24:33 *"And let those who cannot find a match keep chaste, until God makes them free for want out of His grace."*

15.0 Celibacy

- 15.1 Celibacy is not recommended for Muslims. Muslims must marry amongst their community and procreate to the Will of God.
- 15.2 The Qur'an states at 24:32 *"And marry those among you who are single.."*

16.0 Equality and Women's Rights

- 16.1 Women are given equal rights to men. This has been so for over 1,400 years. Articles 16 - 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are consistent with the Qur'an.
- 16.2 Muslim women are permitted to own property, buy or sell property, operate any form of valid business enterprise, inherit property and sell off that property if they desire.
- 16.3 Men are designated as the protectors of women and children.
- 16.4 The Qur'an states at 4:32 *"For men is the benefit of what they earn. And for women is the benefit of what they earn. And ask God of His grace."*

17.0 Marriage

- 17.1 Marriage is recommended of a person to the opposite gender.
- 17.2 Marriage of persons of same gender is not permitted.
- 17.3 Muslim parents are recommended to get their matured sons and daughters married to Muslim people of choice as the son or the daughter desires. Forced marriage is not allowed for Muslims. Articles 16 - 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are consistent with the Qur'an.

- 17.4 The marriage event must have a prior engagement event and the two who are supposed to get married, must see each other and happy to proceed with the marriage.
- 17.5 If however, either of the two declines, then marriage cannot be proceeded with.
- 17.6 The marriage ceremony must have two witnesses for each side and witnesses must testify that they actually witnessed voluntary and valid concurrence between the persons to be married.
- 17.7 In addition, once the bride comes to her husband's house, the husband's side must hold a public gathering called "*Walima*." The whole purpose of the "*Walima*" is to send the messages out and wide to their friends and neighbours, that the bride has been correctly and lawfully married and did not elope or living in sin.
- 17.8 Generally, there are partying and the newlywed are blessed by their guests.
- 17.9 Children from marriage of Muslim woman to non-Muslim man are not Muslims unless and until the children reach understanding and have voluntarily converted into Muslims with Muslim pledge.
- 17.10 Marriage amongst close relatives is expressly forbidden.
- 17.11 The Qur'an states at 4:23-24 "*Forbidden to you are your mothers, and your daughters, and your sisters, and your paternal aunts, and your maternal aunts, and brother's daughters and sister's daughters...and your foster-sisters, and mothers of your wives... and your step-daughters...and wives of your sons who are of your own loins...*"

18.0 Adultery

- 18.1 Adultery is not permitted and not encouraged. There is no exception.
- 18.2 The Qur'an states at 4:25 "*So marry them with the permission...and give them their dowries... not fornicating, nor receiving paramours...*"

19.0 Divorce

- 19.1 Divorce may be initiated either by the wife or the husband, after all means of reconciliation have failed.
- 19.2 A pregnant wife cannot be divorced.
- 19.3 The divorce process has to be suspended throughout her period of confinement. She must first deliver her baby.
- 19.4 If after delivering her baby, the intention to divorce is still positive then the process may resume.
- 19.5 Once the first indication for divorce has manifested, the women must be given three months stall time to determine whether or not she may be pregnant.
- 19.6 If she is not pregnant then the rest of the divorce process may resume after at last three attempts, three months apart for reconciling.
- 19.7 Under Fiji Laws' Matrimonial Causes Act, the passage of time between issue of Decree *nisi* and Decree *absolute* are minimums of 3 months and 28 days apart.
- 19.8 The Qur'an states at 2:232 and 65:4 "*And when you divorce women and they end their term, prevent them not...if they agree among themselves in lawful manner.*" "*And those of your women who despair of menstruation...their prescribed time are three months...and the pregnant women...their prescribed time is that they lay down their burden.*"

20.0 Re-marriage

- 20.1 Re-marriage of the same divorced persons is not permitted unless and until either had been married to another person and either widowed or divorced again.

20.2 Thereafter the normal marriage process commences.

20.3 The Qur'an states at 2:229-230 *"So if he divorces her...she shall not be lawful to him afterwards until she marries another husband. If he divorces her, there is no blame on them both if they return to each other by marriage..."*

21.0 Death

21.1 Death is the mid-point connectivity between the material life of compliance in this world and the life after death as the final eternal outcome after the great Day of Judgement.

21.2 Muslims are required to accept death as a decreed promise.

21.3 The Holy Qur'an orders at 29:57 *"Every soul must taste of death; then to Us you will be returned."* Death separates the material body from the soul. Whilst the material body returns to dust, the spiritual soul is taken to rest in an interim pre-judgement waiting stage called *"Barzak."*

21.4 The committing of suicide is according to Islam a criminal act against the Will of God.

22.0 Funeral Service

22.1 Funeral service of a Muslim has certain requirements. The body should not be delayed from burial and so allowing decomposition and body odours to manifest.

22.2 After the body has been bathed, it has to be wrapped in simple burial shroud. There has to be a pre-burial prayer service called *"Janaza"* and burial follows.

22.3 Muslims' bodies are not permitted to be cremated and Muslims' bodies are not permitted to be exposed to the elements such as wild animals and vultures.

23.0 Looking after Parents

23.1 All Muslims are compelled by Islamic ordinance in the Holy Qur'an to love parents, respect parents and to look after parents when parents are in advanced age or even if they are physically disabled.

23.2 Muslims are not permitted to quarrel with parents or even to say *"Fie"* to them.

23.3 Muslims are required to treat parents with same tenderness as parents treat their infants.

23.4 The Qur'an states at 17:23-24 *"And thy Lord has decreed that you serve none but Him, and do good to parents. If either or both of them each old age with thee, say not "Fie" to them, nor chide them, and speak to them a generous word."*

24.0 Wills and Inheritance

24.1 Muslims are required to make out their wills and inheritance program as the property owner desires.

24.2 There have to be at least two witnesses to every will. Both sons and daughters are entitled to inheritance rights in addition to deceased's spouse.

24.3 The Qur'an states at 5:106 *"O you who believe, call to witnesses between you, when death draws neigh to one of you, at the time of making the will, two just persons from among you, or two others from among others than you, if you are travelling in the land and the calamity of death befalls you."*

25.0 Life after death

25.1 Muslims are required to accept the ordinance from the Holy Qur'an that the soul does not die with the body as in the case of animals and other lower forms of life.

- 25.2 Human life in this world is one of compliance test. Muslim people are required to obey all commands of the Holy Qur'an.
- 25.3 On the Great Day of Judgement, there will be resurrection of all persons who lived in this world for whatever period of time. All persons will be put to trials for all the non-forgiven sins they committed in this material world.
- 25.4 Their trails shall be evidenced with recorded historical replay, corroborated event by event as trial disclosures; and the trials will be giving the sinner ample opportunity to mitigate.
- 25.5 God will be Final Judge.
- 25.6 There is no Appeal or Re-trial. Sinners will receive a measure of punishment proportionate to reform them of their sins. Thereafter, depending on the quantum of punishment, all souls will eventually find a way to Heavenly Bliss.
- 25.7 The Qur'an states at 17:13 *"...and we shall bring forth to him on the day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open. Read thy book. Thine own soul is sufficient reckoner against thee this day."*

26.0 Buying and Selling

- 26.1 Buying and selling require honesty in all deals, regardless whether or not the buyer and seller are known to each other.
- 26.2 Seller must warn buyer of product if product quality is lacking or defective.
- 26.3 The Qur'an states at 17:35 *"And give full measure when you measure out, and weigh with a true balance. This is fair and better in the end."*

27.0 Paying Employees/Servants

- 27.1 Employees and servants must be paid as soon as the contracted tasks have been completed.
- 27.2 Slavery is not permitted.
- 27.3 Freeing of slaves is the Muslim recommendation.
- 27.4 Articles 4, 23-24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is consistent with the Qur'an.

28.0 Paying Taxes

- 28.1 All Muslims are required to pay two levels of taxes.
- 28.2 The first level is religious tax, called "*Zakat*" which constitutes 1/40th of the person's income, whether male or female and regardless of that person's age.
- 28.3 This tax is paid into the community of religious leaders who will then arrange for disbursement of the taxes to poor and needy and for the upkeep of the religious institution's disbursement system.
- 28.4 The second level of taxes is the State Taxes called by whichever name and as and when due; and this should be paid to the specific State institution set aside for such purposes, such as the Inland Revenue, the Customs and Excise duties and taxes, etc.
- 28.5 The Qur'an states at 9:60 *"(Zakat) charity is only for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer it...and those in debt...and ordinance from God. And God is Knowing, Wise."*

29.0 Democracy

- 29.1 Democracy in Islam is the way forward for Muslims. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is consistent with the Qur'an.
- 29.2 All Muslims are ordered in the Holy Qur'an to fear God and honour the Head of State or the Government of the day.

- 29.3 The inscription "*Rereveka na Kalou ka doka na Tui*" which appears on the scroll on Fiji Coat of Arms is also in the Muslims' Qur'an at 4:59, which reads as "*O you who believe, obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you; then if your quarrel about anything, refer it to God and the Messenger.. This is best and more suitable to achieve the end.*"
- 29.4 It should be noted that the Messenger refers to Prophet Muhammad who was the Head of State in his life.
- 29.5 The order from the Qur'an further lays the instruction for common law court systems, which shall be presided by the country's Magistrates or Judges.
- 29.6 Articles 9 – 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are consistent with the Qur'an.

30.0 The State

- 30.1 Muslims are required to practise good governance based on fundamental democracy.
- 30.2 The Holy Qur'an orders at 42:38 "*And those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer, and whose affairs are decided by counsel among themselves and who spend out of what We have given them.*"
- 30.3 This follows that Muslim culture is based on counselling and residing within systems of democracy.

31.0 Ethics

- 31.1 Muslim ethics is based on brotherhood on its broadest basis.
- 31.2 People are all members of one very large extended family as line Descendents of Adam and Eve.
- 31.3 Divisions into nations, tribes and families should not lead to estrangement amongst them.
- 31.4 The Qur'an states at 49:13 "*O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with God is the most dutiful of you...*"

32.0 Aggression

- 32.1 Aggression is strictly prohibited. However, defensive fighting is permitted but only to the extent of disabling the aggressor and removing the eminent threat.
- 32.2 If however, the aggressor withdraws, then defensive fighting must cease immediately and subtle initiatives should be taken to bring about amicable relationship between parties.
- 32.3 The Qur'an states at 8:61 "*And if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it, and trust in God. Surely He is the Hearer, the Knower.*"

33.0 Forgiveness

- 33.1 With Muslims, punishment must be proportionate to the evil done; a very just and necessary restriction.
- 33.2 Forgiveness must be exercised if forgiveness will mend the wrong done after consultation with the aggrieved person.
- 33.3 The Qur'an states at 42:40 "*And the recompense of evil is punishment like it; but whoever forgives and amends, his reward is with God.*"

34.0 Jihad

- 34.1 Jihad simply means striving hard in the way of God.
- 34.2 This very explanation to you about Islam is a dimension of Jihad. 34.3 Jihad does not mean terrorism.

34.4 The Qur'an states at 3:103 *"And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful."*

35.0 Terrorism

- 35.1 There is no provision or permission for terrorism in the Qur'an and therefore no provision in Islam.
- 35.2 Terrorism is the cowardly work of failed politicians.
- 35.3 Terrorism with its grammatical variations and cognate expressions means a method of resisting an administration or jurisdiction by deliberate acts of armed violence.
- 35.4 The foundation of Islam is peace and brotherhood in broadest principles.
- 35.5 Failed politicians use religion to gain political mileage, as failed politicians know that religion is closer to a person than blood in his arteries.
- 35.6 Terrorism is the very opposite of what Islam preaches about "peace" that the universal Muslim culture is based on the brotherhood of peace.

36.0 Respecting all Places of Worship

- 36.1 Islam has always allowed religious freedom.
- 36.2 People of all religious beliefs are allowed to have their houses of worship and to actually worship therein. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is consistent with the Qur'an.
- 36.3 Muslims are ordered in the Qur'an to practise their religion and at same time allow others to practice their religion.
- 36.4 The Qur'an states at 22:40 *"Our Lord is God. And if God did not repel some people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which God's name is much remembered, would have been pulled down..."*

37.0 Desecration

- 37.1 Islam respects all places of worship. Any forced entry into any place of worship is desecration.
- 37.2 Many temples have been desecrated in Fiji.
- 37.3 Muslims are neither permitted to desecrate another's place of worship nor are they permitted to support those who desecrate.
- 37.4 Desecrators are promised a place in Hell.
- 37.5 The Qur'an states at 2:114 *"And who is more unjust than he who prevents men from the mosques of God, from His name being remembered therein, and strives to ruin them?...For them is disgrace in this world, and theirs is a grievous chastisement in the Hereafter."*

38.0 The Perfect Exemplar

- 38.1 All Muslims – men, women and children are required to follow Prophet Muhammad in his views, practices and lifestyles, as the Perfect Exemplar, the Final Prophet and as the Final Ambassador of God.

39.0 Nineteen

- 39.1 The numeric 19 is the most difficult mathematical combination of the lowest and highest integers of 1 and 9.
- 39.2 Numeric 19 is the world's greatest copyright master-key mechanism to the Qur'an, which continuously preserves its originality for over 1,400 years and for many centuries into the future.

- 39.3 The totals of all chapters, verses, salutations to God, references to God, mention of men and mention of women, names of prophets, Arabic alphabets, Arabic punctuations, etc are all exact multiples of 19.
- 39.4 Any alteration or modification of whatsoever editorial nature will render the "modified" Qur'an invalid.
- 39.5 Many people tried to alter the Qur'an – and failed.
- 39.6 The preserved originality of the Qur'an has also preserved the originality of the Muslim culture.
- 39.7 Regardless of which country, spoken language or communities of people one may come across, all Muslims have the same culture.
- 39.8 The Qur'an triumphantly states at 74:30 "*Over it are nineteen.*"