

What Drives People to Convert to Islam?

(part 1 of 2)



The nature of religious faith is quite mysterious. As part of their religious faiths, people believe in a variety of deities. There are people who have religious faith in the unseen supreme inimitable power, and then there are others who believe in some humans as Gods, or animals (e.g. monkeys), fire, idols made of stone, and the list goes on.

A lot is associated with having a religious “faith”. Part of it has to do with beliefs passed on through generations. People’s identities therefore get tied to it. Many times, these beliefs and associated feelings are not completely demonstrable by reason or any rational arguments. There is nothing right or wrong with this, but that’s just how the nature of religious faith has come to be.

Almost everyone thinks they are right in their faith and beliefs. Being with people and groups with similar faith further strengthens people’s faith, and they see it as right, even though logical reasoning and argument sometimes can’t explain it all. That’s simple human psychology.

Islam’s arguments based on intellectual reasoning

Muslims believe however, that the Islamic religion is different in this context. One may argue that similar to other faiths there are aspects of it which are not completely demonstrable by reason, but on the other hand the Quranic text, which is God’s words addressing humanity at large, uses intellectual reason, critical thinking, and the process of reflection as a means not only to reinforce the faith of the believers, but also to call non-believers to ponder about the authenticity of Islam as the way of life for humanity at large. Although no religious beliefs can be fully based on logic and reasoning, Islam and Quran provide more than enough examples and an opportunity to examine the truth and

the soundness of its message through the lens of empirical evidence and knowledge.

No one (Muslim or otherwise) would argue that critical thinking and reflection can be a major catalyst for changing one's life. Critical thinking has been used by many to improve their lives simply because a critical thinker asks probing questions about a situation, collects as much information as possible, reflects on the ideas collected and generated in context of the information available, keeps an open and unbiased mind, and carefully scrutinizes assumptions and seeks alternatives.

This is the reason, therefore, that new Muslim converts would attribute the use of intelligent reasoning, reflection and critical thinking when explaining their journey to Islam. Such people cut through the hysteria created in the media to view Islam from a critical lens and following the truth thus comes naturally to them as part of this process. How else can one explain the increase in conversions with the increase of anti-Islamic rhetoric? How else can one explain that more non-Muslim preachers have been converting to Islam than ever before? Although, as Muslims, we believe that guidance comes only from Allah, the use of a person's God-gifted intellectual reasoning has a very powerful role to play in Muslim converts making that destiny changing decision. And once converted, they rarely go back to their old faiths, simply because a faith whose foundations are built on logic and reason is much less likely to be shaken down than one which simply builds upon a set of rites and sacraments.

Reasons attributed by new Converts

Some of the reasons given why people convert to Islam are the eloquence of the Quran's language, its overwhelming scientific evidence and proofs, arguments rooted in intellectual reasoning, and the Divine wisdom behind various social issues. The uniqueness and beauty of the Quran's text has been marveled by the best of Arab linguists and scholars, both Muslim and otherwise, from the days it was revealed until today. The more knowledgeable people are in the language, the more they appreciate the wonders of the textual fluency of the Quran. Revealed more than 1400 years ago, the Quran also has numerous scientific facts that are being validated by science only in this era. Furthermore, it is the only known religious text that challenges mankind to think, reflect and ponder over the creation at large, social issues, God's existence, and more. The Quran, in many instances, challenges people to reflect and think on their own, rather than heeding the loose talk of those whose criticism is based on baseless foundations. Finally, the Quran provides a solution to numerous social issues, deviation from which has been known to cause societal chaos at all levels.

The Quran is a confident assertion of a Supreme Being; the only known religious book that has a confident assertion of a Supreme Being on all issues

ranging from the creation of the universe to most particular components of the social milieu. Moreover, its Divine Text - the language and prose of the Quran - is very different from the language in the Prophet's sayings, which demonstrates that the Quran is not from the creative imagination or inspired words of Prophet Muhammad, as many doubters have alleged in the past, and continue to do even today.

We can see that most of these reasons can only be attributed to the process of critical thinking and intellectual reflection. However, cold reasoning is not enough. The heart has to be engaged in the search: a search whose aim is to reach for the truth at its core. No wonder, then, that when such sincere people hear the Quran for the first time, and understand it, they say:

“We believe in it; surely, it is the Truth from our Lord. Indeed, even before it, we were Muslims!” (Quran 28:53)

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The Quran challenges humanity at large to think, reflect and ponder over their affairs on numerous occasions. This is some of what the Quran states:

- **Thus do We explain the verses (and their signification) in detail for the people who reflect.** (Jonah, Quran 10:24)
- **Do they not think deeply about their own selves (being)? Allah has created not the heavens and the Earth and all that is between them except with truth and for an appointed term. And indeed many of mankind deny the Meeting with their Lord.** (The-Romans, Quran 30:8)
- **He it is Who has appointed for you the night that you may rest therein, and the day to make things visible. Verily, in this are signs for a people who listen.** (Jonah, Quran 10:67)
- **Does man think that he will be left to no purpose?** (The Resurrection, Quran 75:36)
- **Did you think that We had created you in play, and that you would not be brought back to Us?”** (The Believers, Quran 23:115)
- **Or do you think that most of them hear or understand? They are only like cattle; nay, they are even farther astray from the Path.**(The Criterion, Quran 25:44)

- **Do they not reflect? There is no madness in their companion (Muhammad). He is but a plain Warner.** (The Heights, Quran 7:184)
- **Had We sent down this Quran on a mountain, you would surely have seen it humbling itself and rending asunder for the fear of God. Such are the parables which We put forward to mankind that they may reflect.** (The Overcrowding, Quran 59:21)

When studying the many cases of new Muslim converts, we see that engaging in critical thinking and intellectual reasoning have led people to change their non-Islamic faiths – the same faiths that would earlier supposedly have moved mountains, but were diluted by the voice of reason easily heard in the roots of Islam. A mere process of thinking and reflection brings so much into light that otherwise would remain veiled by the distractions and forces of anti-Islam pundits. Those who are bent on seeing only the negative fail to see the light of truth. Rather, they engage in a never ending superficial analysis to unsuccessfully prove their misguided philosophies.

There are many statistics in the media that highlight the phenomenal rate at which people are converting to Islam. Although, the authenticity of all these sources has not been validated for the purpose of this article, some of them include the following:

- According to “The Almanac Book of Facts”, the population increased 137% within the past decade, Christianity increased 46%, while Islam increased 235%.
- 100,000 people per year in America alone, are converting to Islam. For every 1 male convert to Islam, 4 females convert to Islam
- TV Report: 4,000 Germans Convert To ISLAM Each Year
- About 25,000 people convert to Islam every year in the UK alone
- ...many more examples exist.

What about Muslims?

If voices of reason embedded in the teachings of Islam are causing non-Muslims to revert to Islam in droves, why is it that so many Muslims born into the religion usually fail to fully follow, and thus enjoy, the teachings of the religion? The fact is that it may just be the lack of critical thinking and reflection on the part of some Muslims that is forcing the Muslim world to have a substandard way of life as a whole. Islam and its teachings hold the promise of a fulfilling and peaceful life for all. Yet Muslims continue to ignore the basics and get mired in social and moral issues causing unnecessary pain and suffering on themselves and their families. The fact is that only if they would think and reflect

on the teachings of their own religion, they could escape the many problems and challenges that face them.

The Message

To non-Muslims who have only scratched the surface of Islam and may be getting distracted by those who are the wrong torch bearers of this religion and by the biased voices in the media, the message is simple – try to view the teachings of Islam with a critical lens. It may be that you will be able to see more reason than you may initially have thought was not present. To Muslims, the message is that sometimes we do not appreciate the teachings of our own religion simply because we never think and grow beyond the few religious practices in our operating lives. A focused effort to learn, think and reflect more will help us get closer to the religious teachings in ways that can drastically improve our lives.