

## Key concepts

- The concept of Allah – tawhid (oneness) and shahadah (bearing witness) – the belief and practice at the heart of Islam, including the nature of Allah and the importance of this in the daily life of Muslims.
  - The statement of faith and the role of this in converting to and adhering to the tenets of Islam as well as being accepted and supported by Muslim congregations and communities as part of the worldwide community of Muslims (ummah).
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- Islam teaches uncompromising monotheism in the belief in tawhid (oneness of Allah). The worship of all idols and any partner or son of God is also rejected. Idol worship is regarded as the greatest sin in Islam (shirk).
  - Allah created the universe alone, was the first cause, and is eternal and beyond space and time. Allah goes on guiding and steering the universe according to his plan. Allah is all-powerful everywhere (omnipotent), as well as being compassionate and merciful.
  - To describe the unseen, Muslims use 99 names which reflect the qualities of God. Since idols are prohibited, mosques are decorated with the word of God from the Qur'an, often using beautiful calligraphy.
  - The infinite nature of God and God's order and beauty in the universe is reflected in geometrical patterns and shapes which decorate the walls of mosques.
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- The shahadah is the first pillar of Islam, introduced to babies and recited in front of 2 witnesses when someone chooses to adopt Islam as their religion.
  - The shahadah is a recognition of tawhid and links faith and practice. The shahadah is said as part of every formal prayer in Islam, and often before death, as a testimony to belief before facing God's judgment.
  - The shahadah is simple and is regarded as the difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. Islam does not have any lengthy statement of faith although other beliefs come from it.
  - The shahadah is important for Muslim communities to recognise converts and support them, as well as giving the new Muslim an opportunity to display their faith, rather like a person being born again. The shaving of the head is similar to the ceremony performed upon Muslim babies.

## Key quotes

- 'God is Unity: wholly indivisible, entirely unique, and utterly undefinable. God resembles nothing in either essence or attributes.' (Aslan)
- 'The Koranic conception of Allah is as a Creator who is never absent from His creation ... he is one who manifests Himself constantly through His creation.' (Turner)
- 'It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein.' (The Qur'an Sura 50:16, Yusuf Ali)
- 'The stimulus in the art of the mosque is an abstract pattern with neither beginning nor end, conveying the impression of infinity.' (Waines)
- 'It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on earth; Moreover His design comprehended the heavens, for He gave order and perfection to the seven firmaments; and of all things He hath perfect knowledge.' (The Qur'an Sura 2:29, Yusuf Ali)
- 'It is incumbent on all Muslims, regardless of whether they are 'born Muslims' or 'converts', to make the shahada part of their mental make-up.' (Turner)

## Key words

Shahadah	Tawhid	Creation ex nihilo	Ibadah
Jinns	Akhirah	Kafir	Mu'min
Arabesque	Din	Fard	Omnipotent

## Issues for analysis and evaluation

### Key questions, arguments, and debates

1. The extent to which the Islamic concept of Allah is coherent. Muslims refer to Allah as immanent and at the same time transcendent. Some question whether this is coherent. Another aspect is that Allah is both compassionate and a judge, who can send people to hell. Allah is all controlling (and determines predestination) but then there is suffering in the world. These issues lead to the question of coherence.
2. Whether the shahadah is more to do with private faith than public declaration. It is essential to declare in front of witnesses, and to believe in the heart. Which (if either) is more important? Matters of the importance to the community as against the personal faith of the believer should be compared here.