

## A Model of Spirituality for Ageing Muslims

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**Abstract** Spirituality's influence on general well-being and its association with healthy ageing has been studied extensively. However, a different perspective has to be brought in when dealing with spirituality issues of ageing Muslims. Central to this perspective is the intertwining of religion and spirituality in Islam. This article will contribute to the understanding of the nature of Islamic spirituality and its immense importance in the life of a practicing ageing Muslim. Consequently, it will help care providers to include appropriate spiritual care in the care repertoire of a Muslim care recipient. It is assumed that the framework for a model of spirituality based on Islamic religious beliefs would help contextualise the relationship between spirituality and ageing Muslims. Not only challenges, but also the opportunities that old age provides for charting the spiritual journey have underpinned this model.

**Keywords** Spirituality · Religion · Islamic spirituality · Ageing Muslims · Spirituality model for Muslims

*The spiritual eyesight improves as the physical eyesight declines.*  
–Plato.

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## Introduction

Many people turn to religion and faith to find solace and meaning during illness and to cope with a situation where they find their physical, mental, and cognitive abilities declining, such as happens with age. Spirituality offers a pathway to a more positive ageing, while ageing provides yet another opportunity to embark on the spiritual journey. Although the road through life may have twists and turns, the journey also reveals new and wondrous scenes to the traveller. One must also be ready for the journey to end, and, as the end draws closer, if one can smile while looking back on the path travelled, the journey can be said to have been a good one. Muslims believe that life in this world is but a brief stopover; the final destination will be determined by *Allah* (the Muslim name for God) on the basis of their deeds in this world. The *Qur'an* (13:26)<sup>1</sup> says, "...the life of this world as compared with the Hereafter is but a brief passing enjoyment".

Although there is continuing debate surrounding the meaning of spirituality as well as the exact relationship between religion and health (Bursell and Mayers 2010; Carmody et al. 2008; Gillieron and Huguélet 2006), it is widely accepted that the overall well-being of people is enhanced by spiritual and religious beliefs and practices (Benson 1997; Calhoun and Tedeschi 1998; Benn 2001; Park 2007). It is, therefore, not surprising that the modern philosophy of *comprehensive care* emphasises the need for *holistic care* by taking into consideration appropriate physical, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions in care practices. Various studies have already validated the efficacy of such approaches, such as those by Frazier et al. (2004) and Schulz and Mohamed (2004), Gall et al. (2011), and Shaw et al. (2005).

This paper aims to contribute to the expanding notion of comprehensive care by proposing a particular spirituality model for Muslims that can be used to help understand and address the spiritual needs of Muslim care recipients. Since most of the literature on spirituality is written from a Judeo-Christian perspective, the existing models generally reflect those faith traditions. Therefore, for followers of Islam, a framework is needed that is built on the core concepts and goals of Islamic spirituality; this marks the point of departure for this paper. The paper includes a general discussion on worship, spirituality, and religion from an Islamic perspective in order to contextualise the discussion on the model of spirituality for ageing Muslims.

## What is Worship in Islam?

Muslims believe that the whole purpose of life is to worship *Allah* and to seek His Pleasure. Worship is an individual responsibility for a Muslim based on a direct relationship between the Creator and His creations. There are no intermediaries, and this personal relationship is established and strengthened by following the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*.<sup>2</sup> These sources

<sup>1</sup> The first number indicates a chapter in the *Qur'an*; the second denotes a verse in that chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Muslims base their laws on the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. The *Qur'an* is their holy book containing God's message revealed in Arabic to Prophet Muhammad (When their prophet's name is mentioned, Muslims use the phrase "peace be upon him" to show their respect. They are also encouraged to use a similar salutation when other prophet's names are mentioned) over 1400 years ago in Makkah (Mecca), Saudi Arabia, by Archangel Jibril (Gabriel). *Sunnah* includes the specific words, habits, practices, and silent approvals of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Muslims refer to *Sunnah* for guidance and direction on issues of daily lives which are not directly addressed in the *Qur'an*.

provide a means to demonstrate and maintain relationship with, and remembrance of, *Allah* in everyday lives.

Worship begins with recognising the Oneness of *Allah* and is not confined to specific actions or rituals. True worship is the constant reference to *Allah* which is manifested when every act that is taken and every word that is spoken by a Muslim is with *Taqwa*—the awareness of *Allah*—and in accordance with seeking His Pleasure. While worship includes obeying *Allah*'s commands and following the examples set by Islam's Prophet, the outward conformity is easier than the "realignment of the soul" that leads to spiritual growth; it is the inner sincerity in turning to God that is the quintessence of Islamic spirituality.

## Religion and Spirituality: What do They Mean to Muslims?

*Religion* refers to a personal or institutional system of organised beliefs, practices, rituals, or ways of worship; *spirituality* generally describes the feeling of connectedness with a higher power or consciousness and the search for answers to questions about the meaning of life, of illness and other sufferings, of death, and the purpose of life itself.

The religious and spiritual beliefs adopted by people influence the way that individuals, families, and community groups respond to significant life events such as disability and ageing. It is important therefore to analyse the concepts of religion and spirituality and to understand what influences these are seen to have on positive ageing and well-being of a Muslim.

The understanding of spirituality in Islam is unlike the secular understanding and is rooted in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. *Taqwa* or God-consciousness is an essential element in Islamic spirituality and the aim of the Islamic belief system and is rooted firmly in the Islamic creed of absolute monotheism—the Oneness of *Allah*: there is no God but *Allah*.

Islam, the religion that Muslims follow, literally means submission to the Will of *Allah*. Islam influences all aspects of daily lives as Muslims regard their religion to be the "complete code of life". Therefore, it is difficult to conceive of a Muslim as being spiritual without being religious. Religious rituals are an integral part, and an individual's relationship with *Allah* is the focal point, of Islamic spirituality. Thus, those who adhere to Islam in their everyday lives see both their religious beliefs and their spirituality coming together. With religion as the starting point and spirituality as the destination, as well as the continuous and pervasive existence and interconnectedness of both religion and spirituality in making the journey more complete and fulfilling for a Muslim, he or she arrives at a point where the religious beliefs and values infuse "one's perceptions of life", (Rulindo and Mardhatillah 2011, p. 3) and religion and spirituality overlap. Spirituality can be viewed as a lifestyle for devout Muslims in that it shapes their values, thoughts, and actions in the light of *Allah*'s Pleasure. It serves as a means of reflecting or thinking that would bring one closer to *Allah*.

The fourteenth-century Muslim scholar and jurist Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya (cited in Chittick 2010), in his book *Ighathat al-lahfan (Aid for the Sorrowful)*, has aptly summarised the core concept of Islamic spirituality by arguing that the root of Islam is "love for God, intimacy with Him, and yearning to encounter Him".

In sharp contrast to the changing landscape of religion and spirituality where religion is moving from the traditional "broadband construct" to a narrower one and the concept of spirituality is taking away many of the traditional characteristics or dimensions of religion, Islam reinforces that spirituality and religion can co-occur and overlap each other in perfect

harmony. In other words, in Islam, spirituality is certainly not an alternative to religion, and the two constructs of religion and spirituality are neither distinct nor polarised. Islamic spirituality supports and builds on organised behavioural patterns, practices, and rituals as prescribed in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*.

Without spirituality, religion becomes an unthinking, mindless routine. Spirituality illuminates the heart and mind with true God-consciousness; it also transforms, enriches, and lifts knowledge and wisdom about the meaning of life. Although spirituality is generally seen as providing meaning in life and relationships, it is much more for Muslims and mirrors, to a large extent, the view taken by Kenneth Pargament (cited in Zinnbauer et al. 1999, p. 909) that “spirituality is the heart and soul of religion, and religion’s most central function”.

In this context, Nasr (1991, p. xiii) provides a critical perspective on Islamic spirituality when he argues:

All of Islam is in fact based on the central doctrine of Unity (*al-tawhid*), but what can specifically be called Islamic spirituality is the experience and knowledge of this Unity and its realization in thoughts, words, acts, and deeds, through the will, the soul, and the intelligence. This spirituality is ultimately to live and act constantly according to God’s Will, to love Him with one’s whole being, and finally to know Him through that knowledge which integrates and illuminates and whose realization is never divorced from love nor possible without correct action.

Islamic spirituality is, therefore, God-oriented spirituality as distinct from world-oriented and humanistic (people-oriented) spirituality.<sup>3</sup>

If Islamic religion is the form, Islamic spirituality is the essence. In a sense,

...what distinguishes the spirituality of Islam from the religion taken as a whole, then, is ‘the dimension of depth or inwardness’, so that the forms of the religion are interiorized, rather than opposed; and the journey from the form to the essence which it expresses can be conceived as the movement from the outward to the inward, the periphery to the centre, which is the locus of realized Unity. (Iqbal Academy, undated)

Without the essence, the form is a hollowed-out structure, while without the form, the essence is without its dwelling,<sup>4</sup> its nest. The form is needed for grounding and for marking out clear boundaries; otherwise, the essence will move towards Spilka’s (1993) “fuzzy” concept that “embraces obscurity with passion”.

Tariq Ramadan (2014) sees Islamic spirituality as the refinement and elevation of one’s innate nature for the purpose of connecting with *Allah* and worshipping Him. People may experience a constant struggle to curb the bad, evil, or negative human instincts and strengthen the innate good and positive ones; this struggle within oneself is made easier if a Muslim remembers and connects with *Allah* and seeks His Help through religious practices such as the five daily prayers, fasting, supplication, charity, reading the *Qur'an*, and meditation.

Muslims believe that true happiness and peace can only be found in the “cleansing of one’s heart and self” of all evil and malice.<sup>5</sup> This is spirituality in Islam and a central

<sup>3</sup> For further elaboration on this, see Spilka (1993).

<sup>4</sup> “Dwelling relates to inhabiting a sacred space to feel at home and secure in its symbolic universe”, Dein (2005).

<sup>5</sup> For further elaboration on this, see Abdalla and Patel (2010).

concept of its teachings. Viewed in this way, spirituality can draw parallel with a form of jihad, one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith. Elucidating the various meanings of *jihad*, Maher Hathout (2002, p. 18) states:

... The word jihad has a root verb: jahada, which in Arabic means exerting maximum effort or striving. The theological connotation is striving for betterment. Its major form is the struggle within oneself for self-improvement, elevation, purification, and getting closer to God, in other words, spirituality.

The essence of Islamic spirituality is largely captured in the definition of religion provided by James (1902/1961, p. 42) who views religion to be the manifestation of “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine”.

A practicing Muslim would not experience any “existential vacuum” (a breakdown of meaning in modern society) that would need to be filled by embarking on a journey to find “existential meaning”. Islamic spirituality is not one of “existential quest”, or “inner motivation” but is an inner quest of relationship and prescription.<sup>6</sup>

## Different Orientations

One of the dominant orientations to explain individual differences in religious beliefs has been developed by Allport and Ross which relates to intrinsic versus extrinsic orientation of religiosity. Allport and Ross (1967) contend that most people find themselves at different points on this continuum; they argue that extrinsic values are always instrumental and utilitarian and that people having this orientation may find different uses of religion, such as when it provides safety and security, solace and distraction, sociability and affiliation, belongingness and meaning, and status and self-justification. According to Allport and Ross (1967, p. 434), for the extrinsically motivated, “The embraced creed is lightly held or else selectively shaped to fit more primary needs. In theological terms the extrinsic type turns to God, but without turning away from self”. Allport and Ross go on to argue that those with intrinsic orientation “... find their master motive in religion. Other needs, strong as they may be, are regarded as of less ultimate significance, and they are, so far as possible, brought into harmony with the religious beliefs and prescriptions. Having embraced a creed the individual endeavours to internalize it and follow it fully. It is in this sense that he *lives* his religion”. Nelson et al. (2002) also reinforce the argument that intrinsic religiosity parallels both religion and religion-based spirituality, whereas extrinsic religiosity mirrors more closely religious practice without its spiritual component.

Intrinsic religiousness is, in fact, a hallmark of Islamic spirituality where a Muslim lives his life centred on his religious beliefs and seeking *Allah's* Pleasure. Extrinsic religiousness, with its primary motivation to use one's religion to gain some social or worldly benefits, falls short of the level of sincerity demanded by Islamic spirituality. This is not to say that all Muslims are motivated by intrinsic religiousness.

Islam also provides the framework for both experiential and expressive dimensions of spirituality. The former is that which is “... experienced through thoughts and feelings

<sup>6</sup> For an analysis of the theoretical polarization of the concepts of religion and spirituality, see Zinnbauer et al. (1999).

derived from a relationship with a transcendent reality”, while the latter refers to “... behaviour and activities that are directed toward fostering the same relationship”.<sup>7</sup>

Islamic spirituality encompasses both a substantive and a functional perspective.<sup>8</sup> It is defined by its substance or the core, i.e. seeking the Pleasure of *Allah*. The functional perspective, regulated by the former, sees the Muslim faith permeating all aspects of a believer’s life and guiding him or her to come closer to *Allah*.

## What the *Qur’an* Says

In order to understand the features of Islamic spirituality in its proper context, it is important to quote some relevant verses from the *Qur’an*. This will set the stage for presenting the proposed model of spirituality for ageing Muslims in a later section.

The purpose of life is made clear in these three verses of the *Qur’an*: “Say: ‘Verily, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for *Allah*, the Lord of the *Alamin* (mankind, *jinn*s,<sup>9</sup> and all that exists)’ (6:162); ‘Did you think that We had created you in play (without any purpose), and that you would not be brought back to Us?’ (23:115); ‘And I (*Allah*) created not the *jinn*s and humans except they should worship Me (Alone)’ (51:56)”.

The image of *Allah* that is repeatedly depicted in the *Qur’an* is of One Who is Ever-Merciful, Oft-Forgiving, and Oft-Returning (to the believer when he or she repents and turns to *Allah*) (2:37, 2:54, 2:160, 110:3) yet also of One Who is swift and strict in punishment (8:13, 13:6). Verse 98 in chapter 5 captures these two attributes of *Allah*: “Know that *Allah* is Severe in punishment and that *Allah* is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”. Thus, a Muslim would experience both hope and fear in his or her relationship with *Allah*.

The following three verses from the *Qur’an* mention the frailty of human beings:

“And when harm touches man, he invokes Us, lying down on his side, or sitting or standing. But when We have removed his harm from him, he passes on his way as if he had never invoked Us for a harm that touched him!...” (10:12)

“*Allah* is He Who created you in (a state of) weakness, then gave you strength after weakness, then after strength gave (you) weakness and grey hair. He creates what He wills. And it is He Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Powerful” (30:54).

“And he whom We grant long life, We reverse him in creation (weakness after strength). Will they not then understand?” (36:68).

## Spirituality and the Ageing Muslim

Ageing is at once a challenge and an opportunity. It is indeed a challenge when physical, mental, and cognitive abilities are threatened; it can also be an opportunity to make use of the “idle time” brought about by retirement and a slower pace of life to seek to connect with God, perhaps for the first time for many. Zinnbauer et al. (1999, p. 913) state the support and comfort found in spirituality: “For those seeking to conserve a sense of

<sup>7</sup> For further elaboration on this, see Sawatzky (2002, p. 6).

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed analysis on substantive and functional perspectives, see Bruce (1996).

<sup>9</sup> *Jinn*s are sapient beings that *Allah* created from smokeless fire before creating human beings. They are physically invisible to humans but live in a parallel world. They can be either Muslims or non-Muslims.

meaning in the face of seemingly incomprehensible events, appraisals of the situation as God's will or as an opportunity for spiritual growth appear to be especially helpful. Feelings of spiritual support and partnership with God in coping also seem to be particularly valuable to people searching for a sense of connectedness and control in life". It is pertinent to mention here one of the few studies (Tohit et al. 2012) done on healthy ageing of older Muslims where participants stressed on the necessity of maintaining or working towards attaining good health; being healthy was seen as essential in helping them to carry out their religious and spiritual obligations.

Spirituality in ageing may or may not differ from spirituality earlier in life. Much of it would be determined by an individual's upbringing, life events and experiences, current circumstances, presence of illness, the pathway of religious development, level of religiousness and religious knowledge, and spiritual awareness. Mehta (1997, p. 103) believes that religion has an impact in old age only if it has been learnt in childhood and reinforced in adulthood. That is why it may not be possible to claim universal applicability of a spiritual model even within the same faith group. Then again, the trajectory of religiosity is not necessarily linear for an individual, with the possibility of the level of religiosity varying with changes in personal and environmental situations. It would be folly to cast older people into stereotypical modes of spirituality. And all these are as true for Muslims as it is for those of other faiths.

## Model of Spirituality for the Ageing Muslim

Johnstone et al. (2012), using spiritual experience subscale and religious practices subscales, found Muslims to be the most spiritual and religious group among sample groups drawn from five different faiths.

In a study on how individuals define their religiousness and spirituality, Zinnbauer et al. (1997, p. 562) concluded that whether one considers oneself religious or spiritual would largely be determined by the meaning and relevance of these terms to members of a given religious or ideological group. Thus, it is no surprise that the spiritual model for different faith groups will not be the same. Even if they seem to recognise the same component, it may be that the component may mean different things to people of different faiths or groups.

Most of the literature on religion and spirituality with respect to ageing has, so far, focused on followers of the Judeo-Christian faiths. Following is a brief overview of some of these models.

Synthesised from the work of others, Elkins et al. (1988) have developed a multidimensional, humanistic model of spirituality for which they sought preliminary, informal validation and received positive reaction from interviewees who were thought to be "highly spiritual" followers of Buddhist, Jewish, and Christian faiths. Elkins et al. identified nine components of spirituality: (1) transcendent dimension, (2) meaning and purpose in life, (3) mission in life, (4) sacredness of life, (5) material values, (6) altruism, (7) idealism, (8) awareness of the tragic, and (9) fruits of spirituality.

LaPierre's model (1994) recognises the multidimensional nature of spirituality and is made up of six fundamental aspects: (1) the journey, (2) transcendence, (3) community, (4) religion, (5) "the mystery of creation", and (6) transformation.

In developing a model for religion and coping, Pargament et al. (2000) talk about five key religious functions: (1) meaning, (2) control, (3) comfort/spirituality, (4) intimacy/spirituality, and (5) life transformation.



Six major spiritual themes of ageing underpin MacKinlay's (2002) generic model of spirituality: (1) ultimate meaning in life, (2) response to meaning in life, (3) self-sufficiency/vulnerability, (4) wisdom/provisional to final meanings, (5) relationship/isolation, and (6) hope and fear. Her model of spirituality in ageing is built around four themes and tasks of ageing. The themes are as follows: self-sufficiency/vulnerability, wisdom/final meanings, relationship/isolation, and hope/fear while the associated tasks are transcend loss/disabilities, to find final meanings, to find intimacy with God and/or others, and to find hope.

Goldberg (2010) has proposed a model that delineates five basic functions that he believes religion in its most complete form serves: (1) transmission, (2) translation, (3) transaction, (4) transformation, and (5) transcendence. It is to be noted that Goldberg has chosen to prefix each of these functions with trans—"because religion at its best crosses boundaries and points to realities beyond the ordinary".

There are some similarities among these models; however, as Islamic spirituality is based on the religion itself, there is a need to have a model for Muslims that is bound by the religious edicts and reflects the religious values. It is believed that such a model would be more specific, effective, and appropriate for Muslims. Although studies have affirmed that Islam shares some commonalities with other religious traditions, it is also distinctive in many ways. Therefore, theories and conceptual frameworks that have been developed mainly within Western cultural contexts may not be appropriate to be used for Islam and might be ethnocentric.<sup>10</sup>

Borrowing Goldberg's (2010) use of the prefix "trans-" for each function, the following paragraphs outline a spiritual model for Muslims in the light of the teachings of Islam. The purpose of this exercise is to focus on the core concepts and goals of Islamic spirituality, not to develop a tool to measure the state of a Muslim's spirituality or to detect changes in it. It is a tentative model offered as a starting point for developing a broader Islamic model of spirituality. Although this model may be largely applicable to Muslims of any age, it is particularly relevant for older Muslims who may see the "fourth stage"<sup>11</sup> of life creeping upon them. But then, experience of ageing is not uniform either. The model embraces the four domains of spiritual well-being: personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental.<sup>12</sup> Each component of the model is described in the light of relevant verses from the Qur'an. Built around the central theme of seeking *Allah's* Pleasure and keeping in mind that "God enters by a private door into every individual" (Emerson 1841), the seven basic tasks or functions of spirituality for an ageing Muslim are identified as follows:

1. Translation: Translation, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (undated), is "a change to a different substance, form, or appearance". A Muslim, walking on the spiritual path, engages in translating life's experiences and events from what they appear on the surface into an explanation that provides a deeper understanding of these. They may engage in reviewing past life and reconstructing it; reframing or reinterpreting events and relationships that are either relevant to their present life or significant to them; and cultivating and displaying greater tolerance and wisdom, all in the light of their faith beliefs. This is akin to what MacKinlay (2002, p. 162) refers to as the "spiritual aspect of reminiscence", and is a process that helps to acquire a "sense of final meanings in life" (ibid). The Qur'an says: "Say: 'Nothing shall ever

<sup>10</sup> For more on this concern, see Sue (1992).

<sup>11</sup> Akin to a product life cycle, the four stages of life can be seen as birth, growth, maturity, and decline.

<sup>12</sup> For more on the interconnectivity of these domains, see Fisher (2011).



happen to us except what Allah has ordained for us.<sup>13</sup> He is our *Maula* (Lord, Helper and Protector)...’ (9: 51); ‘No calamity befalls on the earth or in yourselves but is inscribed in the Book of Decrees (*Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz*), before We bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for Allah. In order that you may not be sad over matters that you fail to get, nor rejoice because of that which has been given to you. And Allah likes not prideful boasters’ (57:22–23)”. Grounded in the concept of *tawhid* and the Omnipotence of *Allah*, Islamic teachings stress on the belief that nothing happens without a purpose that everything, including pain and suffering, is part of *Allah*’s plan and that seeking to come closer to *Allah* by submitting to His will is the path to salvation. The means and methods, together with the goals and significance or relevance of the search for meaning, must be reinforced by *Taqwa*.

2. Transaction: Transaction is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (undated) as “a communicative action or activity involving two parties or things that reciprocally affect or influence each other”. Islam enjoins upon the believers to rectify, to the best of one’s ability, any unfair or wrong transaction that may have been made. Entering into and settling of debt is an example of transaction; debt default is a serious matter in Islam. If the word “debt” is used in a broad sense to include any right or due that must be fulfilled, then forgiving people and seeking forgiveness from those who may have been wronged forms part of the transaction that needs to be undertaken if the spiritual journey is to be rewarding. The *Qur’an* emphasises repentance, and part of repenting is to seek forgiveness. Tolerance and compassion in dealing with others would have to be important requisites for transaction: “...Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (24:22). Transaction in the context of this spiritual model will have to include relationships with fellow human beings, creatures, plants, and every living thing. That the environment, too, forms part of the transaction equation is exemplified by verses in the *Qur’an* that repeatedly mention the marvels in nature and asks believers to appreciate its beauty, balance, and benefits therein, take care of nature, and see in it signs of *Allah*’s majesty and mercy.<sup>14</sup>
3. Transformation: One must deal with the forces of good and evil that are innate in human nature. Often at old age, one may aspire to achieve transformation<sup>15</sup> that basically translates into undoing some or much of what one has become—an attempt at religious purification. Although it may be achieved in a myriad of ways, it has to begin with repentance and turning to *Allah*: “...Truly, *Allah* loves those who turn unto Him in repentance...” (2:222). One way of accomplishing transformation could be through cleansing one’s heart of hatred, envy, malice, bitterness, hypocrisy, and discontent, and filling it with humility and compassion, forgiveness and reconciliation, consideration and understanding, and gratitude and thanksgiving. The following verses from the *Qur’an* exhort a Muslim to engage in transformation: “*Allah* accepts only the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and foolishness and repent soon afterwards; it is they to whom *Allah* will forgive and *Allah* is Ever All-Knower, All-

<sup>13</sup> Despite disputes among Muslim scholars in the Middle Ages in regard to predestination and man’s free will, the most authoritative writings on this by prominent Muslim scholars Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and his disciple Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) take the view that *Allah*, while Omnipotent, does not force man to do anything; He has, instead, granted man free will to exercise choices, which then makes man responsible for his actions. For more on this, see Perho (2001) and Bori and Holtzman (2010).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, 15:19–20, 6:141 (*The Qur’an*).

<sup>15</sup> According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (undated), transform means “to change (something) completely and usually in a good way”.

- Wise” (4:17); “The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, Except him who brings to *Allah* a clean heart” (26:88–89); “They shall have all that they will desire with their Lord. That is the reward of *Muhsininun* (good-doers). So that *Allah* may remit from them the evil of what they did and give them the reward, according to the best of what they used to do” (39:34–35); “...whosoever fears *Allah* and keeps his duty to Him, He will remit his sins from him, and will enlarge his reward” (65:5); “Then He showed him what is wrong for him and what is right for him; Indeed, he succeeds who purifies his own self. And indeed he fails who corrupts his own self” (91: 8–10)
4. Transition: Islam teaches that life as we know it in this world will end when the soul is taken at death. However, life does not end with death; Muslims believe that after human beings are resurrected on the Day of Judgment, they will have eternal life in the Hereafter. The Divine Judgement will be pronounced on the basis of how we led our lives in this world. Those who lived on the whole a “good” or moral life according to *Allah*’s commands will be rewarded with life in Paradise. Those who lived a “bad” life, or did not believe in *Allah*, or rejected His prophets’ teachings, will be condemned to Hell. Of course, Islam also teaches that if a person truly repents and stays away from evil, *Allah* may forgive him or her.

Spirituality plays a very important role in helping Muslims prepare for death and in offering them hopes of Divine forgiveness that would make the transition from this temporary world to the Hereafter less difficult and more peaceful. The *Qur’an* states, “*Allah* increases the provision for whom He wills, and straitens (it for whom He wills), and they rejoice in the life of the world, whereas the life of this world as compared with the Hereafter is but a brief passing enjoyment” (13:26); “...For those who do good in this world, there is good, and the home of the Hereafter will be better. And excellent indeed will be the home (i.e. Paradise) of the *Muttaqun* (pious)” (16:30); “Everyone is going to taste death, and We shall make a trial of you with evil and with good, and to Us you will be returned” (21:35). “And indeed the Hereafter is better for you than the present (life of this world)” (93:4). These verses are reminders about the transient nature of life in this world. They show the interconnectedness of life here and in the Hereafter, and emphasise that the ultimate goal has to be the reward in the eternal life.

5. Transference: Transference is “the act of moving something from one place to another” (Merriam-Webster). Extending this meaning to Islamic spirituality would mean moving from despondency and feelings of frustration to seeking/experiencing relief from life’s burdens and anxieties, including death anxiety, by putting complete trust in *Allah*, seeking refuge in Him, pleading for His Guidance, Help, and Love, and surrendering to His Will. Awareness of human limits and limitations and humbling oneself before the Magnificent and Exalted Power of *Allah* restores the tired despairing soul with serenity and wisdom to traverse the ageing journey and cope with the difficulties it may bring. Life reviews<sup>16</sup> that one may engage in, more so in old age, may bring out forgotten or suppressed negative experiences and feelings as well as unresolved conflicts, all of which may lead to guilt, anguish, or depression. The following verses from the *Qur’an* soothe and comfort and offer hope: “...*Allah* (Alone) is Sufficient for us, and He is the Best Disposer of affairs (for us)” (3:173); “....And whosoever fears *Allah* and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty). And He will provide him from (sources) he never could imagine. And whosoever puts his trust in *Allah*, then He will suffice

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed analysis of life review process and its implications in later life, see Butler (1963).

him...” (65:2–3); “...whosoever fears *Allah* and keeps his duty to Him, He will make his matter easy for him” (65:4). Transference is about renewing and reaffirming one’s relationship with *Allah*, and not about seeking compensation for losses, uncertainties, or difficulties that accompany old age.

6. Transcendence<sup>17</sup>: Spirituality may result in a transcendental experience for a Muslim. This experience can manifest when ordinary religious rituals turn into or lead to an extraordinary experience of coming closer than ever before to *Allah*. It can also manifest when a Muslim can transcend the confusions, doubts, fears, hopelessness, and uncertainties of everyday life and find meaning beyond changed or adverse circumstances. Through submission to *Allah* and His Will and bowing to His Majesty, Omnipotence, and Transcendence—what is true worship in Islam—a Muslim can transcend from an ordinary existence to becoming an obedient and grateful servant of *Allah*. “Is not Allah Sufficient for His slave?..” (39:36). “Say: ‘Verily, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for *Allah*, the Lord of the *Alamin* (mankind, *jinns*, and all that exists)’” (6:162).
7. Transposition: To transpose is “to change the position or order of (two things), to change (something) by giving it a different form, using it in a different place or situation, etc”. (Merriam-Webster). In the context of this model, transposition will take place when religious and/or spiritual pain pushes physical suffering to a lower level. This is at once a boon and a bane—a paradoxical situation for the Muslim. If physical pain can be pushed away, albeit for a while, it is a relief from physical suffering. But if it happens because of spiritual and religious pain coming to the fore, paradoxically this is a very welcome opportunity to make amends in preparation for the end of life. “*Allah* burdens not a person beyond his scope. He gets reward for that (good) which he has earned, and he is punished for that (evil) which he has earned...” (2:286).

In the context of this model, transposition may also be seen as changing of priorities when a spiritual Muslim pursues less and less of the material world and seeks more and more avenues to please *Allah*. They may move away in different degrees from worldly affairs and commit to seeking *Allah*, His closeness, and His Pleasure, readying to meet Him and hoping for the highest abode in Heaven. This is different from the interiority that may be forced upon elderly individuals by the society or the environment. However, it does in no way imply giving up on life or on many of its joys that can still be experienced even as one is ageing. It is not social disengagement but a voluntary mental withdrawal to pursue reflection, introspection, and life review. These activities need not be all about regrets and brooding but also need to be a reminiscence of happy memories and fulfilling times that may serve as a reminder to express gratitude to *Allah*.

These components of the spiritual model for ageing Muslims are informed by the teachings of Islam, in particular, by verses from the *Qur’an*. These seven themes could translate into goals or tasks for older Muslims. The continuity of past, present, and future is important for understanding and accepting life’s journey, and the components of the proposed model help to provide a useful perspective. The model helps to come to terms with and appreciate the past, to find meaning in the present, and to see hope in the future. However, as MacKinlay (2002, pp. 155–156.) says, “Absolute wholeness is probably not possible in this life, but the goal is to continue growing in the spiritual dimension until

<sup>17</sup> “Exceeding usual limits, extending or lying beyond the limits of ordinary” (Merriam-Webster).

death. The spiritual tasks become more urgent as people move closer to the end of life and begin to realise more clearly a sense of their own mortality”.

## Conclusion

For Muslims, religion and spirituality are neither mutually exclusive nor stand-alone concepts. Religion is the road that needs to be travelled to get to spirituality. As the proposed model is underpinned by *Qur'anic* verses, it may largely be applied to Muslims of any age. Although it is framed in the context of ageing, the model does not espouse late life spirituality. It brings together the different functions that Islamic spirituality can perform for Muslims who seek inner peace in this world and reward in the Hereafter. This model also underscores the relevance of spirituality as a means to achieving the highest good in this world and in the next and not as a tool simply to be used to feel empowered during adversity. In other words, the model emphasises that religious coping must not be the only reason to walk on the path of spirituality. With the concept of Islamic spirituality rooted in the creed of absolute monotheism and its essence being the seeking of Divine Pleasure, practicing Muslims would likely engage in reappraisal of life through introspection and move from preoccupation with self and the material world to a new or broader engagement with spiritual and religious matters.

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