

THE 5 CATEGORIES OF **ETHICAL ACTION**

THE 5 CATEGORIES OF ETHICAL ACTION: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The focus of Islam is on the 'straight path' (shari'a) according to the will of Allah. On this path there is much in life that is encouraged and celebrated. There are also acts that are forbidden but this is a relatively small number.

Islam is a complete way of life involving religious law, family law, social law, general etiquette and much more. The categories help Muslims in their daily lives by providing guidance as to acceptable moral and social behaviour.

They were devised in the second and third centuries by Muslim religious and legal scholars to support living the Muslim life.

There are 5 main categories of behaviour.

- 1) Wajib or fard (obligatory)
- 2) Mustahab (preferred, commendable)
- 3) Mubah/Halal (permissible)
- 4) Makruh (discouraged, reprehensible)
- 5) Haram (absolutely forbidden)

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5 MAIN CATEGORIES OF BEHAVIOUR.

- 1) **Wajib or fard (obligatory):** Actions that are necessary to comply with. In applying this to Muslim life this involves the following areas: 5 pillars: kifayah – community obligations; halal food; personal hygiene must be of a very high standard; debt is not allowed.
- 2) **Mustahabb (preferred, commendable):** actions that are seen as noble. In applying this to Muslim life this involves the following areas: male circumcision; extra prayers; visiting friends and family; tidy room; correct funeral rites; marriage; looking after parents.
- 3) **Mubah (permissible):** actions that are almost neutral. In applying this to Muslim life this involves the following areas: anything that is not in the other categories and covers freedom of personal choice and preference for things.
- 4) **Makruh (discouraged, reprehensible)** are seen as bad actions although not forbidden. In applying this to Muslim life this involves the following areas: urinating in stagnant water; sleeping late in the morning; certain rules during prayer e.g. cannot play with clothing or body, move head left or right or crack fingers; breathing into a beaker; abortion.
- 5) **Haram (absolutely forbidden):** things that under no circumstances are allowed. In applying this to Muslim life this involves the following areas: drinking alcohol; eating pork; killing innocents; adultery; acts of homosexuality; shirk; euthanasia.