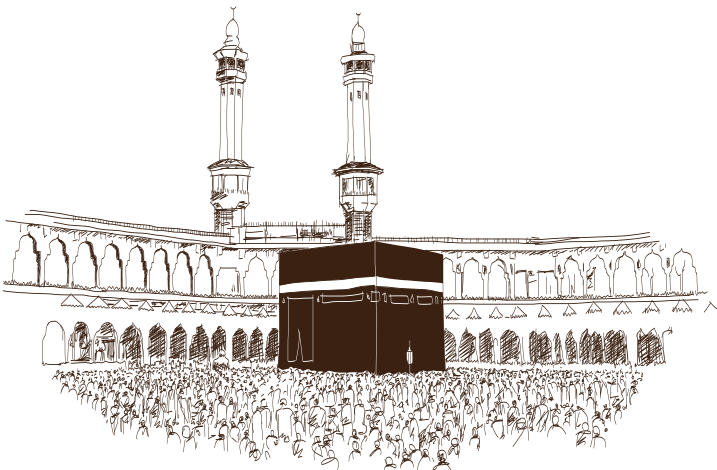


Absence of Priesthood in Islam

Many religions have given the religious prerogative to certain individuals to the exclusion of all others. People's faith and worship is conditional on the consent and approval of these individuals. According to these faiths, the individuals act as intermediaries between people and God, granting forgiveness and claiming to know the unseen and consider those who oppose them doomed to utter loss and misery.

In Islam, however, there is no such office of 'priest'. In fact, Islam has honoured man, held him in high esteem and freed him from any spiritual authority that comes between him and God. It completely rejects the idea that human happiness, repentance or worship should hinge upon the will of certain individuals, no matter how virtuous and devout they may be.



Are there any Special Rituals to Embrace Islam?

A person who, out of conviction, wishes to convert to Islam need not perform any complex rituals at all. He need not convert in a special place or in the presence of a certain authority figure. All he needs to do is profess the two testimonies of faith, fully aware of their meanings, believing in them and being prepared to act on their dictates. The two testimonies of faith are:

Ash hadu an laa ilaaha illallaah, (I bear witness that there is no god but Allah). This means: I firmly believe that there is no God worthy of worship except Allah, and I am willing to worship Him alone and not associate anyone or anything with Him.

Wa ash hadu anna Muhammadan rasul-ullaah (And I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). This means: I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah whom He sent to all humankind. I will obey his orders, avoid whatever he declared prohibited and worship Allah according to his guidance and practice.