

Pashtunwali

Are all ethnic Afghans also Pashtuns? Contemporaries may say yes, while the orthodox will often say no. For those who say no, the deciding factor is dependent on how one lives one's life. Many say that even if someone is born an ethnic Afghan, because this requires no personal effort, that person is not a Pashtun without living according to Pashtunwali. A Pashtun is an ancient religious, spiritual, and community identity tied to a specific set of beliefs, codes, and a linear record of history spanning over 5000 years. Intrinsically flexible and dynamic, Pashtunwali has core tenets including self-respect, independence, justice, hospitality, love, forgiveness, and tolerance to all (especially to the stranger or guest). Besides the core tenets, Pashtunwali is unique to every Pashtun, and it is considered a personal responsibility to discover what Pashtunwali is.

Teachings

- **faith** - trust in Yahweh, God, or Allah (known as *the One, the Creator, or the Architect of the Universe*)
- **unity** - Pashtunwali unites the Pashtun as one people across the world. Where there is true unity, every effort to disunite us will only serve to strengthen the unity we have. What happens to one happens to all.
- **freedom and independence** - the belief that freedom in physical, mental, religious, spiritual, political and economic realms is for all to pursue, man and woman, so long as it is done without bringing harm to others.
- **hospitality** - being hospitable to **all**, especially guests and strangers, and, at times, even the most hostile of enemies is a key teaching.
- **justice and forgiveness** - Pashtunwali also teaches us if one intentionally wrongs you, you have the right to seek eye-for-an-eye justice. As long as you do not overzealously avenge the injustice done to you, whomever has wronged you may not avenge your justified reaction.
- **brotherhood, friendship, and trust** - the belief that fellow Pashtun brothers should be trusted and assisted to the greatest extent possible without bringing harm to oneself.
- **honor** - the belief that Pashtuns should maintain their independent human dignity. Family honor is dependent on women being perfectly chaste to the point of being "invisible" outside of the family. For example, they cover themselves with a garment that prevents them being identified as an individual.
- **self-respect** - the belief that individuals must respect themselves, and respect others in order to be able to do so, especially those they do not know and do not share common beliefs with. Respect begins in the home, with wives, mothers, and children.
- **family** - the belief that the family unit must be glorified under a sacred conviction of responsibility and duty with respect for wives, daughters, elders, parents, sons, and husbands. Also, recognizing that new wisdom is without the barrier of age or gender, encouraging good ideas through the support of elders creates the most enlightened community of all.
- **Pashtun history** - great value is placed in Pashtun history, with all its depth and pluralism, tragedies and victories, spanning over 5000 years. It teaches us to keep the mind open, to continue the search for the truth, much of which has vanished under history itself.