

# Islam Practices

## **Topics covered:**

1. The five pillars
2. Ten Obligatory Acts
3. Shahadah

4. Salah

5. Sawm

6. Zakah

7. Hajj

8. Jihad

9. Id-ul-Fitr

10. Id-ul-Adha

11. Ashura

**Remember:** if a question is asking you for similar beliefs it is asking for two of the same (either for or against). If it is asking you for contrasting, they need to be different (one for and one against).

## 7. Hajj

- ✓ Hajj is a pilgrimage. It should be made at least once in a Muslim's lifetime, provided they are healthy and wealthy enough to do so.
- ✓ Hajj starts and ends in the holy city of Makkah.

**'Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to God by people who are able to undertake it'. Qur'an 3:97**

### **Origins:**

- ✓ Around 4000 years ago, Ibrahim was told to take his wife and son to Arabia by God. He was told to leave them there with some supplies of food and water. After several days the supplies ran out and they were suffering from hunger and dehydration.
- ✓ Hajira tried to find help by running up the two hills but she couldn't find any. She prayed to God for help. Ishmael struck his foot on the ground and water gushed up from the earth. They traded the water for food.
- ✓ When Ibrahim returned, he was told to build a shrine to God. This became the **Ka'aba**.
- ✓ Centuries later the city was established using the water from the well (named the Zamzam). Over the years, people started to worship idols which were kept in the Ka'aba.
- ✓ Muhammad journeyed to Makkah with a large group of Muslims, and in 630 CE the Ka'aba was returned to the worship of one God alone.
- ✓ This story is reflected when Muslims complete Hajj.

### **How Hajj is performed**

**State of Ihram** – Before Hajj begins Muslims must enter a sacred state called Ihram. This involves ritual washing, praying and putting on special clothing. After this they are ready for the pilgrimage to begin.

**Circling the Ka'aba** – Pilgrims circle the Ka'aba anti-clockwise seven times. If possible they try to touch the black stone built in to the Ka'aba. Many Muslims believe that this is the only stone from the original Ka'aba in existence. As they circle the Ka'aba they recite the pilgrims' prayer.

**Travelling to Arafat** – The crowd walks along a walkway linking the hills of the story of Ibrahim and his family. After completing seven circuits of the walk they return to Ka'aba to collect bottles of water from the Zamzam. Muslims then either walk of travel 13 miles to Arafat. Halfway there, they stop for the night at Mina, where they pray and read the Qur'an.

**Standing at Arafat** – At dawn pilgrims walk from Mina to Arafat, where Muhammad preached his last sermon. They spend the whole afternoon praying. Islam teaches that God will forgive the sins of all who complete the standing at Arafat, as it is a hard time, but only if they know they have done wrong, are determined not to do it again, and prepared to try and make up for their sins.

**Throwing pebbles at Mina** – At the end of the day, Muslims walk the Muzdalifah, where they spend the night. On the way they collect 49 small pebbles to be used the next day at Mina. At Mina, there are three stone walls which represent the devil and temptation. Pilgrims throw the pebbles they have collect at the walls to show that they reject evil. Many pilgrims then sacrifice an animal. The food that is not eaten, is frozen or canned and given to the poor. To follow the teachings of the Qur'an and the example of Muhammad pilgrims then cut their hair.

**Returning to Makkah** – The next day, pilgrims return to Makkah to circle the Ka'aba seven more times. They then return to Mina and spend two more nights there, remembering God and reflecting on his blessings.

**'Safa and Marwa are among the rites of God, so for those who make major or minor pilgrimage to the House it is no offence to circulate between the two'. Qur'an 2:158**

### **The significance of Hajj:**

- ✓ Many Muslims go a number of times even though it is a requirement to only go once.
- ✓ It can bring about a deep spiritual transformation that makes them a better person.
- ✓ It teaches sincerity and humility in a person's relationship with God.
- ✓ It produces inner peace, which is shown in the values of justice, honesty, respect, kindness, mercy and forgiveness.
- ✓ It shows self-discipline. The physical and mental demands it imposes are great.
- ✓ It emphasises unity and equality.
- ✓ It reminds Muslims of the faith and examples set by Ibrahim, Hajira and Ishmael.
- ✓ It can lead to forgiveness of sin.

## 8. Jihad

- ✓ Jihad is an important concept for Muslims. It refers to struggling against evil, either as an individual or as the collective fellowship of Islam.

**'But those who have believed, migrated, and striven for God's cause, it is they who can look forward to God's mercy: God is most forgiving and merciful'. Qur'an 2:218**

### **Greater Jihad:**

- ✓ A personal inward struggle of all Muslims to live in line with the faith.
- ✓ They must observe the five pillars to bring them closer to God.
- ✓ Muslims must devote their lives to God by avoiding temptations like drugs and alcohol.
- ✓ Some try to improve life for people in the community
- ✓ By completing these things, Muslims improve themselves spiritually and deepen their relationship with God.

### **Lesser Jihad:**

- ✓ Less important than greater Jihad. It is the outward struggle to defend Islam.
- ✓ There are texts in the Qur'an which appear to allow extreme violence but they cannot be used to defend terrorism.
- ✓ Muslims must follow the rules set about by Holy War when taking on the task of lesser Jihad.
- ✓ Neither lesser Jihad nor holy war should be used to defend terrorist attacks. However lesser Jihad in misinterpreted in modern times

## 9 Festival of Id-ul-Fitr

- ✓ Means the 'festival of breaking of the fast'.
- ✓ It has several other names such as, **the sugar feast, the sweet festival or lesser Eid**.
- ✓ It marks the end of the month of Ramadan. During this time Muslims do not only celebrate the end of a month of fasting, but are thanking God for the strength he has given them to fast for a month.
- ✓ Muslims are also thanking God for giving them his guidance and wisdom through the Qur'an.

### **How is it celebrated?**

- ✓ Celebrated for either one, two or three days.
- ✓ Muslims gather together in mosques or outdoor areas to say prayers. There is also a sermon from the Imam reminding them to forgive and forget issues during the year.
- ✓ Everyone wears their best clothes and homes are decorated.
- ✓ Special foods are eaten, and there are processions through the street.
- ✓ In areas where Muslims live, they may be given the day off to enjoy the festival.

## 10. Festival of Id-ul-Adha

- ✓ It is the festival of sacrifice or **Greater Eid**.
- ✓ Last for four days.
- ✓ It remembers and honours the Prophet Ibrahim, who was willing to sacrifice his son on God's command. **(Qur'an 37: 100-112)**
- ✓ Ibrahim was going to sacrifice his son on God's command even though he loved him dearly. As he was about to do it, God prevented it and gave him a ram to sacrifice instead. He passed the test of being willing to carry out God's commands.

### **How is it celebrated?**

- ✓ Forms part of Hajj, but is celebrated all over the world. People will visit family and friends and enjoy festive meals.
- ✓ Begins with prayers in the mosque and a sermon from the imam about sacrifice. Animals are slaughtered to remember Ibrahim's sacrifice. Some Muslims buy slaughtered meat from their local butchers which has been slaughtered in a specific way. They share the meat between them or give money to charity.
- ✓ Cards and presents are given and community celebrations organised.
- ✓ People living on their own receive invitations to go their neighbours to share meals. Those in hospital will receive visitors to make sure that everyone is included in the celebrations.

## 11. Ashura

- ✓ Shi'a festival which means 'tenth'.
- ✓ Sunni Muslims refer to Ashura as the Day of Atonement. They remember it as the day when the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt. Others believe it remembers the day when Noah left the ark after the flood.
- ✓ Muhammad nominated Ashura as a day of fasting from sunrise to sunset.
- ✓ It is a day of mourning for Shi'a Muslims as it remembers the death of Husayn the son of the Imam Ali, and grandson of Muhammad. It is a day of mourning for the martyrdom of Husayn.
- ✓ It remembers the battle fought Shi'a Muslims under Husayn and Sunni Muslims under the Caliph Yazid I. Husayn and his army were defeated and the men were killed by being trampled upon by horses and set on fire. Their possessions were taken and the women were taken captive.
- ✓ Husayn's martyrdom is widely seen by Shi'as as a symbol of the struggle against injustice, tyranny and oppression.

### **How is it commemorated?**

- ✓ In many Muslim countries, a public holiday takes place. During the day Shi'a Muslims take part in a public expression of grief and mourning. Some even hurt themselves to connect with Husayn's suffering and death. However, religious authorities have condemned these acts saying they are wrong for Muslims to do.
- ✓ Muslims in the UK, will go for a procession and to listen to speeches. They are encouraged to donate blood to remember the sacrifice instead of hurting themselves. In Iraq, many Shi'as will go on pilgrimage to the shrine which is believed to hold the tomb of Husayn. Ashura has become a point of difference between some Sunni and Shi'as and in many countries security is heightened for the occasion.
- ✓ For Sunni Muslims, Ashura is a day when many will voluntarily fast. Many give to charity, show kindness to their family and to the poor, recite prayers and learn from Islamic scholars.
- ✓ It is not such an important festival or as solemn an occasion as it is for Shi'a Muslims.

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## 4. Salah

### Times of prayer:

- ✓ Some Muslims are required to pray at 5 set times during the day.
- ✓ The times alter slightly each day.
- ✓ They pray: just before sunrise, just after midday, afternoon, just after sunset and night.
- ✓ Shi'a Muslims combine the midday and afternoon prayers, and the sunset and night prayers, so they pray 3 times a day.

### Preparation for prayer:

- ✓ It is important to be spiritually clean before prayer.
- ✓ Muslims complete ritual washing or ablution which is called **wudu**.
- ✓ They follow detailed instruction on how to was which is in the Qur'an.
- ✓ Mosques have special rooms for washing, one for men and one for women.
- ✓ It is completed with running water, if this is not possible they use sand or dust.

**'You who believe, when you are about to pray, was your faces and your hands up to the elbows, wipe your heads. Wash your feet up to the ankles and, if required, wash your whole body'. Qur'an 5:6**

### Direction of prayer:

- ✓ It is important Muslims face the holy city of Makkah while praying.
- ✓ It means all Muslims are physically and mentally focusing on one place associated with God.
- ✓ If the prayers take place in a mosque, it is easy to achieve as they have a Mihrab. It is a niche built into the wall which shows the direction of Makkah.
- ✓ If prayer takes place outside of a mosque, Muslims used a compass which shows the direction of Makkah.

### Prayer in a mosque:

- ✓ Mosques have carpets which look like rows of prayer mats to give each person suitable room to pray properly.
- ✓ Prayers are led by an imam who is positioned at the front but also facing the Mihrab.
- ✓ Men and women pray at the same time but in separate spaces.
- ✓ It is normal for the imam's voice to be broadcast in to the women's prayer room at the same time so he can lead their prayers.

### The rak'ah:

- ✓ The daily prayers are made up of a number of rak'ah. It is a set sequence of actions and recitations.
- ✓ The rak'ah changes slightly depending on which prayer it is used in but all include basic actions such as; standing and reciting the first chapter of the Qur'an and after bowing, standing upright and making a recitation praising God.
- ✓ Once the number of rak'ah in completed, in a kneeling position Muslims turn their faces to the right then the left, reciting in Arabic 'peace be upon you, and the mercy and blessings of God'.

**'So woe to those who pray but are heedless of their prayer'. Qur'an 107:4-5**

### Jumah prayer:

- ✓ The midday prayer every Friday is considered to be special, and is called the Jumah prayer.
- ✓ All male Muslims are expected to attend a mosque for this prayer, and women may do so if they wish.
- ✓ Once the prayer is finished, the imam will deliver a sermon to remind Muslims of their obligations and duties to God.

### Prayer at home:

- ✓ Muslims are allowed to pray at home.
- ✓ They still have to perform Wudu.
- ✓ Many Muslims use a prayer mat, which they position facing Makkah.

### Significance of prayer:

- ✓ Prayer is important as it is what God commanded them to do.
- ✓ It creates a greater awareness of God, which motivates them to do God's will.
- ✓ It unites Muslims worldwide, because they all pray in the same way.
- ✓ Reciting the Qur'an during prayer reminds them of its importance.

## 5. Sawm

- ✓ Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and the time when they focus on fasting.
- ✓ Muslims fast during daylight hours, so will wake up before sunrise to eat and drink enough to keep them going until sunset.
- ✓ The command to fast can be found in the Qur'an, and it has been obligatory for Muslims to do it since the seventh century.
- ✓ For Muslims fasting is not just about food or drink, smoking and sex are also forbidden in daylight hours.
- ✓ The whole focus during the month of Ramadan is on God, for which purity of thought is required in order to cleanse the soul and free it from harm.
- ✓ Fasting requires self-discipline, but allows Muslims to show they can sacrifice their physical needs as evidence of their submission to God.

**'It was in the month of Ramadan that the Qur'an was revealed as guidance for mankind... So any one of you who is present that month should fast'. Qur'an 2:18**

### Exceptions:

- ✓ Not all Muslims have to fast, although those excused are supposed to make it up later if they can.
- ✓ People can be excused for:
  - health reasons – for example pregnant women
  - those who are too ill to take part
  - young children who need to eat
  - nursing mothers
  - those who are taking long journeys

### The Night of Power:

- ✓ An important festival which marks the beginning of God's revelation to Muhammad.
- ✓ Observing the Night of Power gives Muslims the benefit of worshipping for a thousand months.
- ✓ Muslims try to keep awake throughout the night on each of the possible dates, devoting themselves to prayers and studying the Qur'an.

**'Read! In the name of your Lord who created: He created man from a clinging form. Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One who taught by the pen, who taught man what he did not know'. Qur'an 96:1-5**

**'What will explain to you what that Night of Glory is? The Night of Glory is better than a thousand months'. Qur'an 97:2-3**

## 6. Zakah

- ✓ Zakah is giving alms (giving money to the poor).
- ✓ For Muslims who have enough savings it is compulsory to give 2.5 percent every year to help the poor.
- ✓ Many Muslims work out how much they owe and give it at the end of Ramadan.
- ✓ By giving Zakah, Muslims acknowledge that everything they own comes from God, and that they should use their wealth to remember God and give to those in need.
- ✓ Only Muslims who have savings greater than a certain amount are required to give Zakah.
- ✓ Zakah can be donated directly to a charity such as Islamic relief or can be put into a collection box in the mosque to be distributed.
- ✓ The Qur'an makes it clear who should receive Zakah.
- ✓ In addition to giving Zakah Muslims are encouraged to voluntarily give their money and time to charity at any point of the year. This is called Sadaqh.

**'Alms are meant only for the poor, the needy'. Qur'an 9:60**

### Significance of Zakah:

- ✓ Muslims are fulfilling a duty imposed by God.
- ✓ Gives Muslims a good attitude towards money. They learn to share wealth and not be greedy.
- ✓ Strengthens communities by making the rich support the poor.
- ✓ Links well with Salah. Zakah put the prayers of concern for others into action.

### Khums:

- ✓ An important part of Shi'a practice in addition to Zakah.
- ✓ Requirement for Muslims to give 20% of excess earnings as a donation.
- ✓ Half goes to Shi'a religious leaders, to be spend on the behalf of God on things for religious matters and the other half is given to charity or the poor.

## 1. The Five Pillars

- ✓ Central to Muslim practices, and they have a great impact on daily life.
- ✓ They support the main principles and beliefs of Islam, just as pillars are used to support a building.
- ✓ They help give Muslims an identity as one community and enable them to show their obedience and dedication to God.

### Five pillars are:

1. Shahadah – declaration of faith in God.
2. Salah – prayer.
3. Zakah – charitable giving.
4. Sawm – fasting.
5. Hajj – pilgrimage.

## 2. Ten Obligatory Acts

- ✓ For Muslims who follow the Twelver Shi'a Islam, there are ten duties they must follow.
- ✓ They include the five pillars except for Shahadah.

### Ten Obligatory Acts:

1. Salah – prayer.
2. Sawm – fasting.
3. Zakah – Charitable giving.
4. Khums – a 20 percent tax on income once all expenses are deducted.
5. Hajj – pilgrimage
6. Jihad – the struggle to maintain the faith and defend Islam.
7. Amr-bil-Maruf – encouraging people to do what is good.
8. Nahi Anil Munkar – discouraging people from doing what is wrong.
9. Tawallah – to be loving to the friends of God, including Muhammad and the Imams.
10. Tabarra – disassociating from the enemies of God.

## 3. Shahadah

- ✓ The basic belief of Islam is expressed in the Shahadah.
- ✓ 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah'.
- ✓ Sincerely reciting this in front of Muslim witnesses is the only requirement for joining the Muslim community.
- ✓ It is recited many times during a lifetime. E.g. when a baby is born and in the daily prayers.
- ✓ It provides the foundation for the other four pillars. The other four are actions which put a Muslims faith (expressed in the Shahadah) into action.

### Shi'a Islam:

- ✓ Many Shi'as add an extra phrase to the Shahadah.
- ✓ 'And Ali is the friend of God'.
- ✓ This demonstrates their belief that Ali, was the true successor of Muhammad, and that only he and his descendants know the true meaning of the revelation given to Muhammad (the Qur'an).