

UNIT 4 - INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

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1. Islam is the second youngest religion. Its history dates back to 570 AD.

2. Its founder Hazrat Mohammed was born in Mecca. His father died before his birth and his mother died when he was only six. He was looked after first by his grandfather and then by his uncle.

3. SUNNIS & SHIAS:

After Mohammed there were many more Caliphas (successors). Important names are: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali. Ali was later assassinated and his supporters refused to accept later Caliphas and would accept only Ali's relatives. They were later called Shia Those who believed in the authority of only Mohammed called themselves Sunnis. They believed Mohammed to be the last and the greatest prophet, the seal of the Prophets.

4. Today, the Sunni make up about 80% of the world Muslim population. The Shias live mainly in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon.

5. UNITY OF GOD AND PROPHET-HOOD OF MOHAMMED:

Muslims believe in one Almighty God and the prophet-hood of Mohammed. Koran describes Allah with 99 'Adorable names' and Muslims have 99 beads on their rosaries to help them remember him.

6. Mohammed had 9 wives. He wanted to have a son to succeed him but no son survived him. He was also a warrior and yet a very devout man of God.

7. FIVE PRAYERS:

Muslims pray five times a day. At daybreak and four other times during the day. The prayer words are:

God is most great. God is most great.

I bear witness that there is no God but God.

I bear witness that Mohammed is the Apostle of God.

Come to prayer. Come to salvation.

8. Muslim can say their prayers, known as 'Namaz', at any place: home, street, college, mosque or a playground. Head, hands and feet are washed before all the prayers. All prayers are started with the words: 'In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate'.

9. MEANING OF ISLAM:

The meaning of the word Islam is 'submission' or surrender to the will of God.

10. The spread of Islam was like a hurricane. Mohammed died in 632 and between 635-651 the countries like Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Iran were converted to Islam. Later it spread to Asia, Europe and America. The country with largest Muslim population is Indonesia.

11. THE MUSLIM SOURCE:

The main sources to learn Islam are:

@. **Qoran**, the ancient authoritative Muslim text. For Muslims, the Qoran is a sacred scripture and a book of law. It is the word of God spoken through Prophet Mohammed.

a. **Hadith** - the traditions, which began to be recorded during the lifetime of Mohammed. Throughout Mohammed's lifetime Muslims realised that they could learn not only from what Mohammed had said but also from his life style and behaviour. A Hadith is a verbal report transmitted by word of mouth.

12. THE SALUTATION:

The most common Muslim salutation is : 'Assalamu aleikum' (peace be upon you). It is an Arabic greeting. The reply is 'Wa aleikum salam' (peace be upon you too).

13. THE DUTIES:

For a practising Muslim, the Muslim law prescribes five duties, known as five pillars of Islam.

0. Kalimah (declaration of truth). A Muslim must accept that 'There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet.'
- i. Salat (daily worship): This consists of rakats (prayer sequences) five times a day as follows:
 - @. At daybreak (fajar): 2 rakats
 - a. At midday (zuhr): 4 rakats.
 - b. In the afternoon (asr): 4 rakats.
 - c. In the evening (maghrib): 3 rakats
 - d. At night (isha): 4 rakats.

Azzan is the name of call to the faithful to pray. The words of azzan are:

"God is the greatest. I bear witness that there is no God but Allah. I bear witness that Mohammed is the messenger of Allah. Come to prayer. Come to security. God is the greatest."

According to the time of prayer the rakats and positions to prostrate change.

- ii. Zakat (charity for purification): A Muslim must give in charity one-fortieth of his savings.
- iii. Saum (fasting): A Muslim must observe the month of Ramadan by fasting. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. It marks the time when Mohammed received God's first revelation of the Qoran.
- iv. Haj (pilgrimage): A Muslim must go to Mecca once in his lifetime. The normal month to go for Haj is the 12th month of the Islamic calendar. Sixteen kilometres from Mecca Muslims clean themselves and wrap themselves with two white sheets, one around the waist and other over the left shoulder. A woman must cover herself with a white burka and must accompany a male relative.

14. In addition to five responsibilities (pillars of Islam), a **Muslim must not:**

- @. drink alcohol
- a. eat pork, bacon or ham, or any food prepared in lard.
- b. must not take part in gambling
- c. must not kill, steal, lie or cheat, and
- d. must not commit suicide.

He must:

- @. speak oneness of God
- a. help the needy and the poor
- b. pray daily

15. THE FESTIVALS:

The important Muslim festivals are:

- @. Id ul Fitr - It marks the end of Ramadan It is in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar
- a. Id ul Zuha - It is the festival of sacrifice. It recalls Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son on the command of God. A voluntary fast precedes the day of the feast. It is in the twelfth month of the Muslim calendar.
- b. Meelad ul Nabi - the birthday of Prophet Mohammed. It falls in the fourth month of Islamic calendar,
- c. Hijrah Day - It marks the day of moving to Medina to avoid the persecution in Mecca. It is called the New year day for the Muslims.

16. THE QORAN:

The sacred book of the Muslims is Qoran. It is believed that it was revealed to Mohammed by angel Gabriel in a cave at the mountain Hira, in the month of Ramadan.

After Mohammed's death, his successor Abu Bakar ordered Zaid, a slave freed by Mohammed and later adopted by him as his son, to collect the writings and memories of Qoran which were written on stones, tree leaves and pieces of leather.

The third Caliph, Othman, finding there were differences in various versions of Koran, gave orders for an official version to be prepared. Zaid was again in charge of this mammoth task. The official version was then sent to all the Muslim institutions and variant versions were destroyed.

17. The language of Qoran is Arabic. It has 114 chapters (suras). Some of these are headed Mecca and others Medina, indicating the place where they were revealed to Mohammed. Every Chapter of Qoran but one begins with a caption, 'In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful.' The chapters are not numbered instead have names of persons or things mentioned in those chapters e.g., Abraham, Mary, Cow, Bee etc.

18. The text of Koran is that:

- @. God is one and his name is Allah
- a. The greatest sin is to associate any creature with God and worship him/it instead.
- b. The man is servant of God and his duty is submission to his commands and laws.
- c. The description of the doomsday and the day of judgement.
- d. The laws governing a Muslim both as an individual and a member of Muslim society.

19. According to Muslim law, a Muslim can have four wives. A mutah (temporary) marriage is also allowed to the traders or other persons who have to spend a major part of their lives away from their families and the household.

20. THE MUSLIM CALENDAR:

The Muslim Calendar dates from 622 AD, the date when Muslim left Mecca and moved to Medina to escape the persecution of the Meccans, who at that time were pagans and worshipped a number of gods. It consists of 12 lunar months different from normal solar year.

21. THE BELIEFS:

Muslims believe in the resurrection of the dead on the day of judgement According to their belief the death is only an end of a life in body, there is more life to come after death.

22. According to Muslim belief, all humans are born innocent, free from sins. They are free to do either good or bad deeds. They have the freedom of action. The life after death will be one of reward or punishment depending on what you have done in this life. If you worship Allah and do good actions then you will have happiness here and hereafter. Everyone is God's tenant on earth and has a duty towards him.

23. THE MOSQUE:

Mosque is a holy place for the Muslims. The interior of a mosque is walls and open-courts. In it devotees prostrate on prayer-mats facing towards the direction of Kaaba in Mecca. The direction of Kaaba is marked by a niche in the wall.

24. No images or statues are allowed in a mosque. The focal points of a mosque are the mehrabs (which show the direction of Mecca), a lectern, or holder, on which is placed a copy of Koran and a pulpit from which the Imam preaches his sermons. There are no pews in the mosques.

Friday is the day of assembly. On this day Muslim meet together for prayers in the middle of the day and to hear the Imam preach his weekly sermon.

25. WHO IS A MUSLIM :

A Muslim believes in the reality of the existence of God and Mohammed as the greatest and the last prophet. A Muslim further believes in the divinity of Koran and believes that it is a book of God brought in this book world through Mohammed.