



Islam – An Introduction

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No conflict of interest (BUT)


Islam is:

Religion = Faith = Belief = Conviction

- ▶ Followers are known as Muslims (not Muhammadans)
- ▶ All religions are based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof
- ▶ The first Islamic belief is that there is one Supreme being – ALLAH = God who has created us all, has given us limited free-will and to whom we will return for the final judgement.
- ▶ There are many names describing attributes of Allah – Most Gracious, All Knowing, etc
- ▶ Most often used in the Quraan is: Rubb = Lord

Muslims in the world today

- ▶ Today there are approx 1.6 billion Muslims in the world (24% of world population)
 - ▶ Sunnis constitute 87 to 90% of Muslims
 - ▶ Shia make up 10-12% and majority in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, Azerbaijan. Elsewhere they are minority.


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- ▶ Shia-Ali = party of Ali (Followers of Ali)
 - ▶ Came into being after death of Prophet. Some people thought only the Banu Hashim relatives of the Prophet could be the next leader while others thought it should be the best qualified person
 - ▶ So Abu Bakr was the first Caliph followed by Omar, Osman and then Ali (#4)
 - ▶ The situation again occurred after death of Ali when his followers thought his son, Hussain should be the next Caliph however there was struggle and the Sunni-Shia split became more pronounced.

Commonly used terms in Islam

- ▶ Allah = God Akbar = Greatest
- ▶ Allah-O-Akbar is recited by practicing Muslim at least 102 times every day during formal prayers
- ▶ Imam = someone who leads the prayers (any Muslim can lead prayers when 2 or more people worship together)
- ▶ Qibla = direction you face when praying. It is the Kaaba (for about 3 early years Muslims faced Jerusalem)
- ▶ Mullah = no specific training required and no certification needed. Anyone can be called Mullah as long as he is a Muslim. Similar terms also used are: Maulavi or Maulana – in Suni Islam terms. I used to have classmates who were called “Mullah” or “Maulana”.
- ▶ In Shia there is different hierarchy and they call their leader as Ayatollah

History of Islam

- ▶ In the 6th and 7th Century Arabia was a large desert with many nomadic tribes known as BEDUINS who moved their flocks and families in search of food for cattle and water.
- ▶ Their identities were tied to the tribe.
- ▶ Very few settled communities including Mecca (Makkah) and Medina (Medina).
- ▶ The Arabs worshipped idols, each tribe had its own god but had a concept of superior being Allah. He was however considered as insignificant in their life and far distant. Their interaction was with special idol god of that tribe/clan.

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- ▶ The regional powers – Persia (Iran) and Byzantium had no interest conquering a desert.
 - ▶ Kaaba (Cube) in Makkah was central site for 360 idols.

Once a year Arabs would come peacefully to worship their gods and to trade. In approx 20 mile radius (no weapons were allowed)



(Abyssinia)



Tribes in Arabian cities

- ▶ There were different tribes in different cities in 6th & 7th centuries.
- ▶ In Makkah - largest tribe was Quraish.
- ▶ 12 clans of Quraish
- ▶ Clan of Banu Hashim (Descendants of Hashim) were most prestigious as custodians of the Kaaba where most tribes came to worship their gods
- ▶ Head of Banu Hashim was Abdul Matlib. He had 10 sons

One was named Abdullah. He was married and his wife was pregnant when he died. She had a son in 570 who was named Muhammad (highly praised) by his grandfather.

He was also known as Ahmad (most worthy of praise)

Life of Muhammad

- ▶ His mother died when he was approx 6 years and his grandfather who looked after him died when he was 8 years old. From then on he was raised by his uncle.
- ▶ He had no formal education (could not read or write) that was a privilege of well-to-do
- ▶ From early age he was known as very honest and was called Al-Ameen (trustworthy).
- ▶ He was uncomfortable with idol worship and would meditate for days or weeks.
- ▶ At age 25 he married Khadeja (a well-off widow). Together they had 2 sons who died at early age and 4 daughter who survived to adult age. The youngest daughter Faatima was married Ali of the same Quraish clan. Other 3 married Quraish of different clans.

Revelations of Quraan (Qur-aun)

- ▶ When Muhammad was approx 40 yrs and meditating in a cave he was told “Iqra” = proclaim = read = say.
“Proclaim in the name of your Lord that created man from a clot of blood...”
- ▶ Quraun = proclamation = recitation
- ▶ It was revealed in pieces over 23 years. It is divided into 114 chapters (Surah). Each has between 3 to 286 sentences (verses). Large chapters have sections – each dealing with specified topic (usually).
- ▶ The Quran is not meant to be read sequentially. Any segment of a large Surah and every small Surah gives a message. There is repetition of same message, i.e. arrogance of Pharoah and his encounter with Moses is described in great detail in one chapter and then references made to that briefly in other places where appropriate.

- ▶ The original text of Quraan 1400 years ago is in Arabic which is an active language. It is unchanged since.
- ▶ Most Muslims read the Arabic transcript and will have translation beside that.
- ▶ Quraan was completed in 632 with the final message, *“Today I have completed for you your religion and have given you the last of blessings. Today I have accepted for you Islam as the religion.”* (Islam means in accordance with the will of Allah).
- ▶ The sequences of chapters was organized by Prophet Muhammad, during his life. There were many Muslims who knew the whole Quran by heart and it was written down in pieces by different people which was eventually put into book form.
- ▶ The Quraan contains spiritual, moral, ethical, social and legal messages.
- ▶ Quraan is the Islamic constitution. It has no amendment clause but interpretation of different parts may change from time to time depending on the circumstances.



Fundamentals of Islam

► Five pillars of Islam

1. Kalma (declaration)
2. Salat (formal prayers)
3. Fasting
4. Zakat (poor dues)
5. Hajj (Hujj)

1. Kalma (declaration)

- ▶ Made in presence of others.

When converting to Islam one says *“I bear witness there is no deity except Allah and Muhammad is his messenger”*.

2. Salat = Formal Prayer

- ▶ Five mandatory prayers per day
 - ▶ Before sunrise (Fajr) – 2; After midday (Zohr) – 4; Mid afternoon (Asr) – 4; Soon after sunset (Maghrib) – 3; About an 1 to 1½ hrs after sunset (Isha) – 4
- ▶ You can postpone prayers, pray in different positions and combine some prayers if necessary
- ▶ Friday is the Sabbath when there is congregational prayer in the early afternoon

Other Prayers:

- ▶ Eid = Celebration: twice a year after Ramadan and after Hajj
- ▶ Funeral – only standing prayers

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One Rakat

A = Allah-o-Akbar

3. Fasting

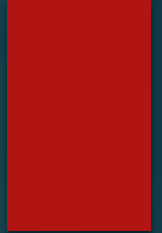
- ▶ During lunar month of Ramadan
- ▶ Fasting is between dawn to sunset
- ▶ There is no eating, drinking, smoking or sex, refrain from anything sinful or criminal (can postpone for good reasons. If that is not possible, pay for one poor person's food for one month)

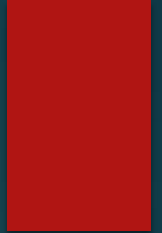
4. Zakat (Poor due)

- ▶ It is 2.5% tax.
- ▶ It is debated whether it's only on liquid assets or assets that you have held for a year, but the cattle and the yield from your farm are included.
- ▶ (it is only for those who can afford)

5. Hajj (Hujj)

- ▶ Pilgrimage to Makkah and four adjacent sites during a specified period of time in last month of lunar calendar.
- ▶ The formal Hajj takes 5 days to perform rituals
- ▶ Approx 2 million people go for Hajj every year. (It is required of those who can physically and financially afford.)
- ▶ **Umrah** = Small pilgrimage – can be done at any time by visiting Kaaba and nearby 2 small hills






Realities of a nation

- ▶ Islam was not only a religion but also a nation and needed laws to govern it – social order, justice, foreign affairs, defense, etc.
- ▶ All those laws were defined by the Quran and were implemented by the Prophet.
- ▶ Some aspects include:

Women's Rights in Islam

- ▶ Before Islam in Arabia and in most other parts of the world, women had no rights.
- ▶ (In Rajput Tribe, if the husband died the wife was burned alive with him)
- ▶ In Arabia, girls were killed as infants so they wouldn't become a source of weakness.
- ▶ Women were treated as property of men

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- ▶ There is one Sura called “Woman” – defining rights of women
 - ▶ Islam considers dowry as property of the wife. It defined inheritance for the woman. It also said the woman could ask for a divorce unlike the custom at that time which was simply the man could divorce with few words and then done.
 - ▶ In Islam there is a waiting period for cooling off, then if the parties agree to divorce there is another waiting period of 3 months before the woman can be divorced. The woman takes all her dowry with her when divorced.

Mahar (Maher)

- ▶ This is a gift given to the wife by the husband at the time of marriage. It could be something immediate and something later.
- ▶ This in perpetuity belongs to her unlike the previous customs where the money was paid to the bride's parents or in some cultures the bride's parents pay the groom's parents, but the bride would not get that.
- ▶ So this is strictly the bride's property it is like a prenuptial agreement.

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- ▶ The marriage is a contract between a man and a woman in presence of other people with identified Mahar and written witnesses.

(Islam identified the minimum standard of rights and decency but not upper limit of that.)

(In our family, girls and boys had equal share in parent's property.)

Diet

- ▶ Pork and pork products are not allowed (for life threatening situation they can be used)
- ▶ Alcohol and intoxicants are not allowed (for medicinal purposes they are fine)
- ▶ Halal = Allowed – only applies to meat
- ▶ No application to vegetables, dairy or fish
- ▶ Before an animal is sacrificed you say “*In the name of Allah, Allah is great*” Any Muslim can do that.
- ▶ In the past sacrifice was made in the name of an idol. Any animal slaughtered in name other than Allah is prohibited for eating.


Hijab

- ▶ It was introduced during the life of prophet and was applied only to the household of the prophet.
- ▶ When women went outside in the dark there were whistles and snide remarks. At that point the women of prophet's household wore Hijab to be identified from others.
- ▶ It came into widespread use some two generations later.
- ▶ It is not mandatory.
- ▶ (My friend used to say only the struggling middle class people in Pakistan have a job)
- ▶ The dress for women is modest.

Jihad

= Struggle = Effort (Not Holy War)

- ▶ Included in the effort is “just war”
- ▶ Definition of “just” varies, depending on who you are, where you are and the circumstances.
- ▶ During the first 13 years of Islam in Makkah, Muslims did not fight. There were many difficulties including physical punishments to Muslims and boycott for 3 years but they did not fight back.


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- ▶ After they migrated to Madina for their own safety in 622, the people of Makkah were unhappy that Muhammad had escaped and they wanted to kill all Muslims including Muhammad
 - ▶ Makkans made 3 attacks on Muslims living in Madina. Eventually there was peace treaty which the Makkans violated.
 - ▶ In 629, large Muslim army from Madina marched to Makkah and there was unconditional bloodless surrender.
 - ▶ Prophet Muhammad came back to Madina and lived there till his death.

Islam and fighting

- ▶ **Jihad = Struggle = Effort**
- ▶ Islam is not pacifists – to turn other cheek,
- ▶ It is not violent but allows fighting in self-defence
- ▶ It allows fighting for “just cause”
- ▶ The definition varies and is subjective
- ▶ Unlike rules of the fighting of 6th and 7th century in Arabia, Islam prohibited mutilation of the body
- ▶ If this opponent surrendered there was no more punishment to the opponent – they would be tried.
- ▶ There was no forced conversion to Islam of those who were defeated

Additional articles of Muslim faith

- ▶ There were prophets before prophet Muhammad. The term prophet used before Muhammad is to indicate which Muhammad we are talking about. We often say “Peace be upon him” after his name. The most common Muslim male name is Muhammad. (That is unlike the Christians.)
- ▶ We hold the previous prophets – Moses, Jesus, in very high regard and we always say salutations to them when we mention their name. We name our children after them.
- ▶ Mary, known as Maryam, is noted in the Quraan as the noblest of womankind. We name our daughters Maryam.

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- ▶ Jesus is known as Eesa and in Quraan he is identified as Eesa son of Maryam.
 - ▶ There are angels whom we do not see and they are assigned different tasks by Allah.
 - ▶ There will be day of judgment - The final accounting.
 - Strict personal accountability for actions

Polygamy



- ▶ The prophet was strictly monogamist for the first 13 years of his mission (28 years of his marriage)
- ▶ In the Battle of Uhad in 625, many Muslim males were killed. They left behind widows and children who had no means to support themselves.
- ▶ So polygamy was allowed with definite guidelines.
- ▶ The treatment of wives must be equal.
- ▶ Sindhi saying “I am better than the man with 2 wives”

(My wife was told I can have 4 wives – No polygamy in my family.)

Muslims in North America

- ▶ It is estimated that 10 to 15% of the African slaves to USA were Muslims (captured during attacks on morning prayers) they had no way to practice Islam
- ▶ First Mosque in USA was built in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1934.
- ▶ First Mosque in Canada was built in 1938 in Edmonton.
- ▶ In 1934, Canadian population was 9 million and there were 700 Muslims
- ▶ In 1967 when I came to Saskatoon there were approx 20 Muslims with population of 100,000. now there is approx 10,000 Muslims.
- ▶ There are probably many that you do not know are Muslims. (One colleague once asked me if I was Sikh or Hindu. He had known me for more than 40 years.)

Our wedding

- ▶ Our wedding was truly intercultural and inter-religious.
- ▶ My best-man was Sikh. Those who stood for my parents was a Hindu couple. My ring-bearer was a Christian. Karla's bridesmaids were Christians and we had Jews in the wedding.
- ▶ (Had he been able to come my bestman would have been a Russian origin, Pittsburgh raised Jew.)
- ▶ We were married in a Unitarian church

Muslim presence in Saskatoon



- ▶ In 1978 we bought a church on 25th street and in 1993/94 we purchased the Grosvenor Park Elementary school which we converted to Islamic Centre
- ▶ We now have two prayers on Fridays as the congregation is too big for single prayer (and there are 3 other places that hold Friday prayers)
- ▶ Muslims from more than 50 countries have come here.


Practice of Islam in Saskatoon

- ▶ I am free to practice Islam as I want
- ▶ I can pray five times a day or even more if I want to.
- ▶ I can fast as long as I want to.
- ▶ I can give Zakat – 2.5% (but they ask for higher taxes).
- ▶ I can go to Hajj every year if I want
- ▶ The University environments were very good to us before we had our own place.

Christian holiday equivalency



- ▶ There is no equivalency of Christmas which is Birth of Jesus Christ.
- ▶ We do not celebrate birth of Prophet Mohammad.
Some people may do in small gatherings but it is not recognized as a Muslim holiday or special event
- ▶ The Friday Sabbath Day is not a day of freedom from work. We are expected to go for prayers and then come back and pursue our regular occupations.
If you can afford it, you can take a day off.
- ▶ There is no religious leader comparable to Pope. We may ask for advice from some more knowledgeable people, but are responsible for own actions.



Thank you for
your
attention.