

Islam beliefs and practices KEY WORDS

Ablution

Ritual washing in Islam. The Arabic term is wudu.

Adalat

The concept of justice in Shi'a Islam

Adam

One of the prophets of Allah. The father of humankind. He built the Ka'aba.

Allah

The Islamic name for God.

Akhirah

Belief in life after death.

Angels

They are spiritual beings created from elements of light. They gave Gods messages to the prophets and watch over humans.

Arafat

A plain near to Makkah where pilgrims gather to worship, pray and ask for forgiveness. This takes place on the ninth day of the Islamic month, the day before Eid ul Adha.

Ashura

A very important festival in Shi'a Islam, occurring on 10th Muharram. Shi'a Muslims commemorate the martyrdom of Hussein (Muhammad's grandson). Ashura is observed by Sunni Muslims for a different reason, as a day of repentance for sins in the belief that they will be forgiven.

Authority

As the direct Word of Allah, the Qur'an has supreme authority. This means its truths must be believed and its commands obeyed.

Beneficence

Literally 'doing good'. One of the 99 Beautiful Names of Allah, it refers to the generosity that Allah shows to humans.

Day of Judgement

The day when Allah will decide about individual deeds, good and bad, and on reward or punishment.

Fairness

This refers to Allah's justice. He treats all humans equally and as they deserve.

Fasting

Not eating or drinking. It refers especially to sawm, which is the 4th of the Five Pillars. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset.

The Five Pillars

The Five Pillars observed by Sunni Muslims which support Islam by encouraging the development of good character, attitude and behaviour. These are shahadah, salah, zakah, sawm and hajj.

The five roots of Usul ad-Din

The foundations of the faith in Shi'a Islam. They consist of five key beliefs: Tawhid(the Oneness of Allah), Adalat (justice), prophethood (nubuwwah), imamate (leadership).

Friday prayer

Jummah. Friday prayers in the mosque, where a sermon (khutbah) is heard.

Giving alms

A key practice in Islam. Zakah is the 3rd of the Five Pillars. Giving alms means giving to those in need, e.g. money, food, time.

The Gospel

The term means 'good news' and it is the good news about Isa (Jesus), one of the prophets of Islam. It was written down by his disciples.

Greater jihad

This refers to the duty of every Muslim to live a good life, staying faithful to the beliefs and obeying the commands of Islam.

Hajj

Annual pilgrimage to Makkah, which all Muslims must undertake at least once in their lives, unless prevented by problems over wealth or health. The 5th of the Five Pillars.

Heaven

Referred to by Muslims as paradise. It is Allah's reward after death to those who have been faithful to Allah and who have repented of their sins.

Hell

It is a place of great suffering after death for those who have rejected the Qur'an's teachings and have led a wicked life. For some it will last forever.

Human accountability

The belief that everyone must take responsibility for their actions and will be questioned about them on the Day of Judgement.

Human freedom

Humans have control over their thoughts, feelings and actions.

Human responsibility

Humans are responsible for most of what they do because they have free will and so will be accountable on the Day of Judgement.

Ibrahim

One of the prophets of Allah. He rebuilt the Ka'aba.

Id-ul-Adha

Celebration of the Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son for Allah. It comes at the end of the period of hajj.

Id-ul-Fitr

A celebration that comes at the end of Ramadan and marks the end of fasting.

The imamate

It means 'leadership' and refers in Shi'a Islam to the twelve imams who succeeded Muhammad as the leaders of Islam.

Immanence

The belief that Allah is close to humanity and involved in the world.

Islam

- The name of the religion followed by Muslims.
- To surrender to the will of God.

- Peace.

Jibril

The most important of the angels and spoke with many of the prophets of Allah. Jibril dictated the Qur'an to Muhammad. On Judgement Day he will assist with the weighing of a person's deeds.

Jihad

'To struggle'. It refers to the effort made to obey Allah.

Jummah

Weekly communal salah performed after midday on a Friday.

Justice

Bringing about what is right, fair, according to the law or making up for a wrong that has been committed.

The Ka'aba

The black covered cube-shaped building in the centre of the grand mosque in Makkah. All Muslims face towards it when they pray.

Khums

This is a practice in Shi'a Islam. It is a 20% tax on annual surplus income and is given to the poor and to religious leaders.

Lesser jihad

This refers to the military struggle to defend Islam. It is carried out according to strict and clear cut rules.

Life after death

Akhirah. Muslims believe that death is not the end.

Makkah

The city where Muhammad was born. The spiritual centre of Islam, it is in Saudi Arabia.

Mercy

One of Allah's 99 Beautiful Names. It refers to Allah's willingness to forgive the sins of those who repent.

Mika'il

One of the most important angels. He gives spiritual and material help to humans. On Judgement Day he will assist with the weighing of a person's deeds.

Mina

Place to be visited on hajj – stoning of pillars.

Mosque

The Muslim place of worship.

Muslim

One who has submitted to the will of Allah and has accepted Islam.

Muzdalifah

Place where pilgrims hold a night prayer and rest during hajj, after the Stand on Mount Arafat.

Muhammad

The last and greatest of the prophets of Allah. He received the Qur'an and his Sunnah and Hadiths are also important sources of authority.

The Night of Power

The name for the night on which Muhammad received the first revelations of the Qur'an.

Omnipotence

One of the 99 Beautiful Names of Allah. It refers to Allah's ability to do anything.

The Oneness of God

Tawhid. It refers to the unity of Allah. Islam is a monotheistic religion.

Pilgrimage

A journey made for religious reasons.

Predestination

This is the idea that everything that happens has been decided already by Allah.

Prophethood

Risalah. Channel of communication with God. Three prophets are set for study: Adam, Ibrahim and Muhammad.

The Psalms

Sacred prayers/poems written by King Dawud (David) who was himself a prophet of Allah.

The Qur'an

The Holy Book revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by the angel Jibril. Allah's final revelation to humankind.

Rak'ahs

Actions made during salah consisting of recitations, standing, bowing and prostration.

Ramadan

Month during which fasting from dawn to sunset is demanded (ninth month of the Islamic calendar).

Recitations

Acts of reciting from memory texts from the Qur'an.

Resurrection

After death, all people will be raised from the dead to face Allah's judgement. This is a physical resurrection.

Revelation

Allah shows his nature and his will to believers through the words of the Qur'an.

Risalah

Prophethood. The channel of communication between Allah and humanity. Three prophets are set for study: Adam, Ibrahim and Muhammad.

Salah

Prayer to and worship of Allah, performed under the conditions set by the Prophet Muhammad – five times a day. The 2nd of the Five Pillars.

Sawm

Fasting from dawn to dusk during Ramadan; sex and smoking are banned when the believer is engaged in this. The 4th of the Five Pillars.

The Scrolls of Abraham

These were individual revelations to Ibrahim that were written on parchment but have perished. They were given on the first day of Ramadan and consisted of stories.

The Shahadah

Muslim declaration of faith. It is a statement of faith in Allah as the only God and in Muhammad as Allah's prophet. The 1st of the Five Pillars for Sunni Muslims. In Shi'a Islam it is not a separate Pillar and it has two additional statements relating to Ali as beloved of Allah and the rightful trustee and successor of Muhammad.

Shi'a Islam

Muslims who believe in the Imamah, successorship of Ali.

Surah

A division (chapter) of the Qur'an. There are 114 in all.

Sunni Islam

Muslims who believe in the successorship of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali.

Tawhid

The oneness and unity of Allah. Islam is a monotheistic religion.

The Ten Obligatory Acts

These are requirements for Shi'a Muslims. They include salah, sawm, zakah, hajj and jihad (duties also for Sunni Muslims) but the final five are not part of the Sunni tradition.

The Torah

This was given by Allah to Musa (Moses), who was a prophet of Allah. It was given on Mt. Sinai.

Wudu

Ablution. Ritual washing performed before salah and also when purification is needed.

Zakah

The 3rd of the Five Pillars. It consists of the giving of alms to purify those who give it and the rest of their money.