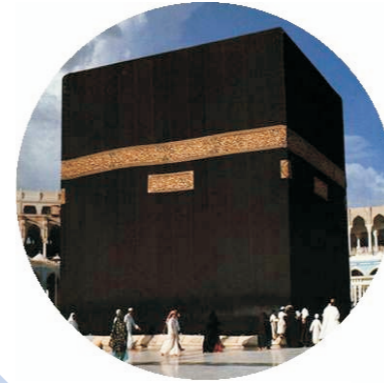


EDUCATION ISLAM

Introduction to Islam and
the Muslim Culture Course

Information Pack



 **Aksaa**
Management & Training Consultants

Produced by:
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Aksaa Ltd

www.educationislam.org

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****Presentation slides & blank sheets for notes can be found at the back of the booklet***

Introduction to Islam and the Muslim Culture Course

Suggested Programme

9:30 Arrival, Registration, Tea/Coffee

- Introduction & Welcome
- Setting the Scene/Expected Outcomes
- Ground Rules
- Islamic Knowledge Quiz
- Background to Muslims
- Discussion
- Visit Mosque & Presentation
- Questions/Discussion

11:15 Break for Tea/Coffee

- Women in Islam session (*may be am or pm*)

12:30 Lunch & Observation of Zuhr (Afternoon) Prayer

- Adhan/Call to prayer
- Basic Beliefs & Practices
- Workshops -in three groups
- Questions/Discussion

3:15 Break for Tea/Coffee

- Review Islamic Knowledge Quiz
- Evaluation

4:30 Close

ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE QUIZ

Below are 32 Statements. Test your awareness by qualifying them as true or false. Please tick (/) the appropriate box.

	<i>True</i>	<i>False</i>
1. Islam is an Asian religion, originated from the Indian Sub-continent.	()	()
2. Muslims pray three times a day.	()	()
3. The Quran has remained completely unaltered.	()	()
4. Allah is the Arabic word for God.	()	()
5. Islam means peace and submission.	()	()
6. Islam, Christianity and Judaism have the same origins	()	()
7. Muslims believe Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon Him) as the last Prophet and to whom the Quran was revealed through Angel Gabriel.	()	()
8. Muslims believe in re-incarnation.	()	()
9. Islam treats women subserviently	()	()
10. All Muslims are dark skinned.	()	()
11. In Islam, Muslims are not allowed to eat pork or drink alcohol.	()	()
12. Muslims can have four wives.	()	()
13. Muslim women must stay at home and look after children.	()	()
14. Muslims believe in life after death and the day of Judgement.	()	()
15. Muslims believe in Jesus, Moses and Abraham as their Prophets.	()	()
16. Muslims can drink water when they fast.	()	()
17. All Muslims want to kill Salman Rushdie.	()	()

Islamic Knowledge Quiz cont.

	True	False
18. Pilgrimage is one of the five pillars of Islam.	()	()
19. <i>Wudhu</i> is a form of ritual washing (face, arms and feet)	()	()
20. There are a billion Muslims in the world.	()	()
21. Muslims believe Adam as the first Prophet of Islam	()	()
22. A Mosque is a place of worship.	()	()
23. In prayer Muslims prostrate to Prophet Muhammad.	()	()
24. Eid is a major festival in Islam.	()	()
25. Muslim marriages must be arranged and the consent of the boy and girl is not required.	()	()
26. Muslim women must be covered, apart from hands and face.	()	()
27. The birth of a girl is not welcomed.	()	()
28. Female circumcision is an Islamic practice.	()	()
29. Male circumcision is an Islamic practice.	()	()
30. Islam, Christianity and Judaism are known as the Abrahamic religions.	()	()
31. Muslim fast from dawn to dusk during the month of Ramadhan.	()	()
32. In Islam, equating God with a partner is a major sin and this is known as <i>shirk</i> .	()	()

EDUCATION ISLAM

Brief Profile of Course Director Kaushar Tai

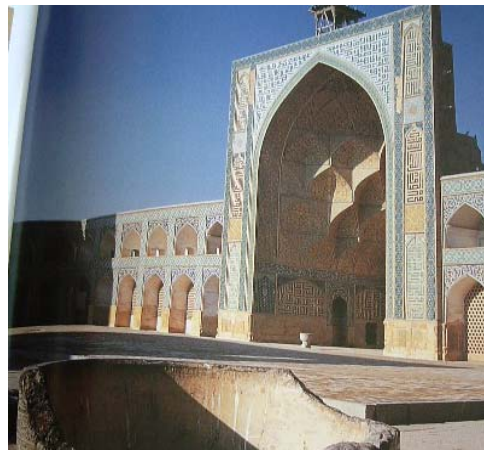
Kaushar is a Management Consultant. He is the founder member and Director of Aksaa Ltd - Education Islam project that specialises in delivering Islamic Cultural Awareness Training for non-Muslim public sector professionals.

Kaushar has held senior management positions in Health and Social Care fields and Regeneration programmes. He is a qualified Health and Social Care professional with experience in managing large and complex projects. Some of the Senior Management positions he has held include Programme Manager for SureStart; Chief Executive of Batley Community Development Ltd.; Health Promotion Manager for the Department of Public Health & Medicine, and Assistant Director of Equal Access at the Leeds Hospitals NHS Trust. He has served as a Non-Executive Director on the Primary Care Trust Board, Dewsbury College Board, and on the Police Authority Recruitment Panel. For 11 years he sat on the Employment Tribunal Panel in Leeds as a Lay member and a Special Member hearing race and religious discrimination cases.

Kaushar has gained expertise in delivering race equality and diversity training including Islamic Cultural Awareness Training to Private and Public Sector professionals working across various Local and National Government Departments and the NHS. In the three years since 2004, over 10,500 people have attended the course in around 80 different locations across the UK. He has also delivered Management Training to Faith Leaders.

Kaushar is active in Muslim/Christian dialogue and champions inter-faith working. For many years he was the Co-Chairman of North Kirklees Inter-faith Council; a membership of all faith communities and people with no-faith, working together to achieve common goals and striving to achieve strong community cohesion. He has undertaken many short term assignments for relief agencies as part of the United Nations NGO consortium working on poverty alleviation, capacity building and sustainable projects.

He holds an MSc in Social Sciences, a Professional Certificate in Management, a Social Work qualification and a diploma in Business and Management.



INTRODUCTION

This information booklet is designed specifically for non-Muslim professionals working in the public sector such as health, social care, education and the Police. The booklet will also benefit the private sector and other companies who employ Muslims or target Muslim customers. It complements the course developed by the author entitled "Introduction to Islam and the Muslim Culture Course" to aid further understanding and application in their work environment.

The purpose of the course and this booklet is the following:

- To make the participant of the course and the reader more aware of Islam and the Muslim Culture.
- To help improve public & private sector services for Muslim communities or School Children.
- To help with policy development incorporating the needs of Muslim communities and striving towards fulfilling the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act & Religion & Belief Regulations.
- The section on Practical needs appertaining to Muslim requirements would be useful in discussing about providing facilities for Muslims.
- To understand the activities and features of a Mosque (Masjid) and Maddresah (Supplementary School).



Picture shows Non-Muslim participants attending the Islam course in a Mosque in London.

Background of Muslims

Muslims come from different racial and cultural backgrounds. They may originate from India, Pakistan, West Africa, Turkey, Somalia, Iraq, Morocco or Malaysia.

Muslims are united in their Islamic faith and perceive themselves as one ummah (one nation) despite their wide ethnic diversity.

Muslims will vary in the observance to their faith. Some will want to pray in their place of work or School; others will choose not to. There will be some that will observe their prayers when they return home from work or School. It is important that Employers and work colleagues and teachers are aware of the needs so that if they wish to adhere to their obligations, they are able to facilitate this need.

In respect of work environment; Muslims are able to achieve their full potential in employment, without jeopardising or compromising their faith. Relatively minor changes to regulations and practices by employers and schools can make a significant difference to Muslim employees and pupils.

The information that follows will provide some important information in fulfilling the requirements of Muslims. However, it is urged that it is always better to ask the service user when developing services.

Islam and Culture

One needs to differentiate between Islam as a religion and a way of life and cultural and traditional practices which come from peoples' own ethnic origin.

There are over a billion Muslims in the world representing 1/5th of the population. They live in every corner of

the globe and thus have their own ethnic and cultural identity. This can be displayed in the form of clothes, the food they eat, the language they speak etc. etc. Such diversity is welcomed in Islam as long it does not compromise the teachings of Islam.

Islam is a complete way of life and the two main sources of guidance and teaching comes from the Quran and the Sunnah (the teaching or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad – pbuh).



A Mosque in a busy town in Morocco

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ISLAM AND THE MUSLIM CULTURE

Islam, the most misunderstood religion, is also the fastest growing in the World. The word Islam conjures up different images for different people, all depending upon their knowledge base of Islam and their contact with Muslim – practicing and non-practicing.

Islam is an Arabic word which means peace and submission. The religion of Islam is the complete acceptance of the teaching and guidance of God: that is to surrender to the will of God. A Muslim accepts freely and willingly the supreme power of God and strives to live his or her life according to the revealed teachings of God. Muslims also work towards the establishment of a just and equitable social order which truly reflects the guidance of God.

Islam is not a new religion. It is, in essence, the same message and guidance, which God revealed to all His Prophets.

“Say. We believe in God and that which was revealed to us and that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and to the Prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit.” (Quran 3:84)

This is a picture of the Madina Mosque or the Prophets Mosque in Saudi Arabia – the second holiest site in Islam.



Muslims believe Muhammad, (peace be upon him), was the seal of the Prophets

and that the message revealed through him was final and authoritative.

Islam, Christianity and Judaism have the same origins. They go back to the Prophet and Patriarch Abraham (peace be upon him) and their three Prophets are directly descended from his sons – Muhammad from the eldest, Ishmail, and Moses and Jesus from Isaac (peace be upon them). Abraham (peace be upon him) established the settlement, which today is the city of *Makkah* in Saudi Arabia and built the ka'ba towards which all Muslims turn when they pray and visit when on Pilgrimage.

Concept of Worship in Islam

The concept of worship in Islam is misunderstood by many people, including some Muslims. Worship is commonly taken to mean performing ritualistic acts such as prayers, fasting, charity etc. This limited understanding of worship is only one part of the meaning of worship. Worship in Islam is everything one says or does for the pleasure of God. This, of course, includes rituals as well as beliefs, social activities, and personal contributions to the welfare of fellow human beings.



Islam looks at the individual as a whole; required to submit completely to God. The Quran presents this concept in the following sublime manner:

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but righteous is he who believes in God and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book and the Prophets; and gives wealth for the love to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to

set slaves free; and observes proper worship and pay the Zakat and those who keep their treaty when they make one, and are patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are those who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing.” (Quran 2.177)

Therefore, every action which is done with the awareness that it fulfils the will of God is considered an act of worship in Islam. Nevertheless, there are specific acts of worship, commonly known as the five Pillars of Islam.

The Five Pillars of Islam

The Declaration of Faith

In Arabic it is known as Ash-Shahadah – Declaration of Faith. “I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except God, and that Muhammad (pbuh) is His servant and Messenger.” The Prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) obliges the Muslims to follow his exemplary life in every way.

Prayer

Prayers are prescribed five times a day as a duty towards God. They strengthen and enlighten the belief in God and inspire individuals to a higher morality. They purify the heart and control temptation towards wrongdoing and evil. “O you who believe! Seek help with patient perseverance and prayers, for Allah is with those who patiently persevere.” (Quran 2.153)



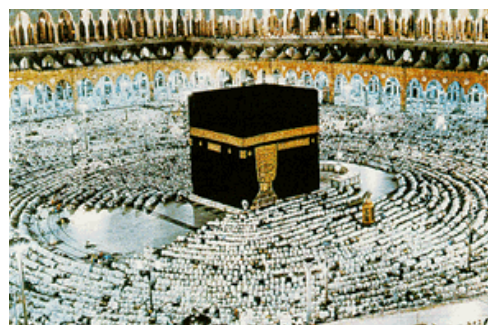
Here are two boys in prayer - demonstrating the two different positions of prayer.

Fasting

Fasting is observed each year during the month of Ramadan. This means abstention from food, drink and sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset. Fasting teaches love, sincerity and devotion. It develops a sound social conscience, patience, unselfishness and willpower. Muslims believe when they fast, God remembers their suffering.

Welfare Due to the Needy

This is known as Zakat payment. Annually 2.5% of the net saving is spent on the poor or needy, as a means of purifying their possessions. The word Zakat means purification and growth. Each Muslim is responsible for calculating and giving their own Zakat individually. Many Muslims also give as much as they can in Sadqa, (voluntary donation) and it is best to do so secretly.



Pilgrimage (Hajj)

Pilgrimage to Makkah in Saudi Arabia once in a lifetime is obligatory, provided one has the means to do so. Hajj implies an individual's temporary suspension of all worldly activities and realisation of oneself as a single soul in front of God alone. A close picture of the Kaaba in Saudi Arabia is shown above.

Women in Islam

Concerning the spiritual status of women, the Quran makes it clear that men and women who practice the principles of Islam will receive equal reward for their efforts.

“Surely for men who submit (to God) and for women who submit (to God), for believing men and believing women, for devout men and women, for truthful men and truthful women, for steadfast men and steadfast women, for humble men and humble women, for charitable men and charitable women, for men who fast and women who fast, for men who guard their chastity and women who guard their chastity, for men who remember God much and for women who remember God much, God has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward “ (Quran 33.35)

Each of the five pillars of Islam – Belief, Prayer, Fasting, Zakat and Pilgrimage; is as important for women as for men and there is no variance in reward. As God states in the Quran:

“The noblest among you before God is the most heedful of you.” (Quran 49.13)

With regards to rights and obligations the Quran says:

“Men are maintainers of women with bounties which God has bestowed more abundantly on some of them than on others; and with what they may spend out of their possessions” (Quran 4.34)

The man therefore has full moral and legal responsibility for the maintenance of his family. Whatever the wife earns is her own to dispose of, either to use it herself or to contribute it to the family budget. The wife is responsible for the care of her home and the welfare of her family. She can express her views and make her suggestions concerning all matters whereas the husband has the responsibility for the running of the affairs of the family.

Concerning the woman's position in Islam, the woman has the right to own and sell property, to inherit wealth, to seek knowledge and to engage in legitimate trade. Islam regards the woman as an independent, perfect member of society, and places no difference between her and the man as far as human virtues is concerned. Islam maintains that salvation will be attained only through piety, virtue, knowledge and good deeds and by the grace of Allah.

The family is the foundation of Islamic society. The peace and security offered by a stable family unit is greatly valued and seen as essential for the spiritual growth of its members. A harmonious social order is created by the existence of extended families. Children are treasured and rarely leave home until the time they marry.

Both men and women are expected to dress in a way which is modest and dignified.

Life After Death

Belief in life after death and the Day of judgement is fundamental to Muslims. The world according to Islam is a place of trial and on the day of judgement each individual will be called to account for his or her conduct and rewarded or punished accordingly. According to Islam, the present life is transitory and the life in the Hereafter will be eternal. A vivid description of what will happen on the day of judgement and also of Heaven and Hell has been given in the Quran and other Islamic literature.

Festivals in Islam

There are two major festivals in the Islamic year. The first is celebrated on the day immediately after the end of the Ramadan. Thus it is known as Idu-l-fitr, festival of breaking the fast.

The second major festival is idu-l-adha, which is celebrated to commemorate Prophet Abraham's (pbuh) willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael, (pbuh) in obedience to God's command. This festival falls on the day after the day of Hajj. This festival takes place two months and ten days after the first festival.



This picture shows Muslims praying in congregation in a Mosque.

Idu-l-Fitr

Muslims put on their new or best clothes and attend the Mosques in the morning to pray in thanksgiving for the blessing they have received from God in the form of the Quran and the keeping of the Fast. They also pay the Sadaqah al-Fitr (welfare due) for the poor. This obligatory poor due is additional to the Zakat members of the household, including a newborn baby, and given to the poorer members of society to enable them to participate in the festival.

Muslims offer their greetings of Eid Mubarak (Happy Eid) and Assalamo Allailukum (peace be upon you). Eid-ul-Fitr, is the Muslims community's assertion of unity and family solidarity. It is a community and family celebration where Muslims cook delicious food, visit and embrace each other. It is also a special occasion for the children, who

receive presents, new clothes, money and greetings.

Idu-l-Adha

This is the momentous event in the Islamic calendar and commemorates the time, 4000 years ago, when Prophet Abraham (pbuh) was at the command of his Lord, willing to sacrifice his own son Ishmael (pbuh) as an act of obedience, devotion and submission to the will of God. God accepted a lamb as a symbol of his devotion. Muslims throughout the world symbolize their willingness to sacrifice their life and property in the name of God and for the cause of Islam. On this day also Muslims put on their best clothes and attend the congregational prayers in the morning. Also those who can afford to, sacrifice an animal and share the meat among family, friends and the poor.



This is picture of the holiest site in Islam, the first Mosque in Makkah, Saudi Arabia. The picture is taken during the time of Hajj, when sometimes up to 2.6 million people, coming from all over the world, pray together to the one and only God and perform the Hajj rituals.

FEATURES OF A MOSQUE (MASJID)

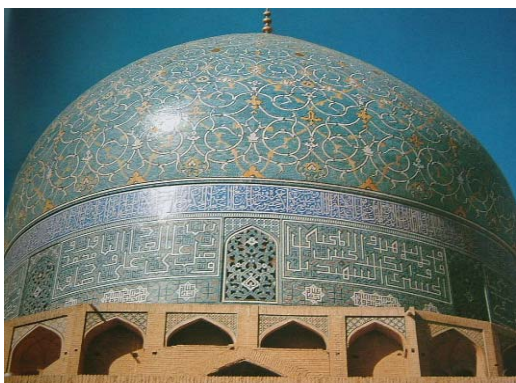
The Minaret

One of the main distinguishing features of a Masjid is the tower, which is called a Minaret. Traditionally the call to prayer (adhan) was made by the muezzin from the balcony near the top of the minaret. In the modern Muslim World, loudspeakers are used to amplify the muezzin's voice. In non-Muslim countries the adhan is usually called within the prayer hall, though at some Masjids special permission has been granted for external loudspeakers to be used for certain prayers.



The Dome

The distinctive dome-shaped roof on a building often indicates a Masjid, though it is not an essential feature. In hot countries the shape is very useful as it keeps the inside of the building cool and airy. Acoustically, the dome acts to amplify the voice of whoever is addressing the congregation.



The Mihrab Arch and Qibla Wall

The direction of prayer is indicated within the Masjid by the qibla wall. When facing this wall, one is also facing towards the Holy Ka'aba in Makkah, (Saudi Arabia), which is the centre of the Muslim World. The Imam faces into the mihrab when leading congregational prayers, and this shape of the mihrab helps to reflect the sound of his voice backwards to the congregation. Mihrabs are usually decorated beautifully with patterns and Islamic calligraphy traditionally written in Arabic.



The Minbar

The stepped platform to one side of the mihrab is a pulpit and is called the minbar. It is used by the Imam to address the congregation before Jumm'a (Friday) prayers and on other special occasions.



Ablution Facilities

Cleanliness is one of the requirements before a Muslim offers prayers; therefore ablution or partial washing (wudhu) is performed. Facilities are normally provided in Masjids for this purpose, so that clean running water is always available. Hands, mouth, nose, face, forearms head, neck, ears, feet and ankles are washed in the manner established by the Holy Prophet Mohammed (peace and blessings be upon Him). The stools shown in the picture are installed to make it easier to wash the feet. These facilities are available in most Mosques.



The Madrassah

Teaching children to read the Arabic language and to study the Holy Quran is vitally important for all Muslim communities. The building used for this purpose is usually adjacent to the Masjid, and holds daily classes for boys and girls many of whom start attending from age 5 years after their day school. Some pupils attend until they have completed the reading of the Holy Quran, but others remain studying until they have learned and remembered the whole of the scriptures. A Muslim who can recite the Holy Quran from memory is called a *hafiz*. Classes for teaching the Urdu language are also held here.

Opening Times

The Masjid is open for the five daily prayers throughout the year, and often at other times also. Prayer times vary according to the season, and are

indicated by a display board or clock face within the prayer hall. The main congregational prayer each week is held on Fridays in the early afternoon, known as Jumma Prayers. This picture shows a clock timetable of the prayer times.



VISITING A MOSQUE (MASJID)

Introduction

The following information will be useful for those Non-Muslims who wish to visit a Mosque with a Muslim colleague or guide.

Muslims would usually be delighted to show others their place of worship. It is the sharing of what they hold very dear to their heart. It is hoped, however, that the visitors observe certain basic rules of conduct.

The term Mosque is commonly used by non-Muslims to define the Muslim place of worship but its correct name is Masjid and this is the term used by Muslims

Before going to visit a Masjid, it is important that visitors give some thought to how they feel. The Muslims being visited would not want visitors to feel unease. Likewise, they would not want to be made ill at ease themselves by criticisms of their way of worship or of their religion. Questions are always welcomed but negative comparisons

with the visitor's own customs are unlikely to promote a friendly relationship.

Whether visiting alone, or as a group, it is important to follow the guidelines for clothing and behaviour so as not to cause offence. For groups, it is important not to talk loudly, thus disturbing anyone who may be at prayer. If any group members have special needs, let the place being visited know in advance so that they can prepare to help. For example, although the custom of the Mosque is to sit on the floor, chairs can often be provided for elderly, infirm or disabled visitors.

Clothing in a Mosque

Clothing should be modest for both men and women. For women this means an ankle length skirt or trousers, which should not be tight or transparent, together with a long sleeved and high-necked top. A headscarf is usually essential for women. Shoes are removed before going into the prayer hall and put on the racks provided. Clean and presentable socks, stockings, or tights are therefore a good idea.

Entering a Mosque

Where women attend the Mosque, men and women usually enter the prayer hall by separate entrances. Visitors may be greeted by the Arabic greeting "Assalamo Allaikum" which means "peace be upon you." The answer, if the visitor would like to use it, is "Wa 'alaikum-as-salam", which means "peace be upon you too". Do not offer, or expect, to shake hands with people of the opposite sex. Before entering the prayer hall or prayer room, Muslim men and women perform wudhu or ablutions if they have not already done so earlier or from home. This is not necessary for the non-Muslim visitor who will not be joining in the prayer.

Entering the main Prayer Hall

Go quietly into the hall, and sit on the floor. If for any reason you are not able

to sit on the floor, you may ask for a chair which is usually reserved for the elderly and infirm and those who are not able to prostrate during prayer. If visiting as a group during a time when prayers are taking place, sit together toward the rear of the hall. Below is a picture of the inside of the most sacred part of the Mosque in Birmingham.



Worship in a Mosque

When salat (Arabic) or namaz (Persian/Urdu), one of the five daily prayer is in progress, non-Muslim visitors are welcomed but simply to observe rather than to join in. No sacred or blessed food will be offered, nor will visitors be expected to make any physical gesture of respect to holy objects (except removing their shoes and acting respectfully in the prayer hall).

Women visiting a Mosque

The main place of prayer is often used only by the men and a separate area is usually provided for women. Where men and women pray in the same hall, they remain in separate groups. Muslim women are expected not to come to the Mosque during their menstrual period. This does not apply to Non-Muslim women. Muslim women pray at home, as they are not obligated to attend the Mosque for prayer in congregation and therefore do not frequently attend the Mosque.

JIHAD

This word has been in frequent use in the Western press over the past several years, explained directly or subtly, to mean holy war. As a matter of fact the term "holy war" was coined in Europe during the Crusades, meaning the war against Muslims. It does not have a counterpart in Islamic glossary, and Jihad is certainly not its translation.

The Arabic word "jihad" means struggling or striving and applies to any effort exerted by anyone. In this sense, a student struggles and strives to get an education and pass course work; an employee strives to fulfil his/her job and maintain good relations with his/her employer; a surgeon strives to assist his/her patient as best as he can and so on.

Jihad can be done with speech, the pen, lobbying or picketing, or the Quran by inviting people to the message of Islam.

Since Islam is not confined to the boundaries of the individual but extends to the welfare of society and humanity in general, an individual cannot keep himself/herself in isolation from what happens in their community or in the world at large, hence the Quranic injunction to the Islamic nation to take as a duty "to enjoin good and forbid evil." (3:104).

Islam does not forbid the use of force as a last resort to bring about the greater good or peace. Every country believes in having an Army to keep the peace and offer protection and security to its people. The same is true in Islam. There are strict parameters laid down, however, in Divine Law should force be used.

*The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) gave various guidelines: **Do not dishonour a treaty. Do not mutilate the dead. Do not kill women. Do not kill children. Do not kill the old. Do not kill those without weapons. Do not kill those engaged in worship***

(priests, rabbis etc.) Do not cut down trees. Do not burn crops. Do not poison wells of your enemies. Fight only those who come at you.

Military action is a subgroup of Jihad and not its totality. That was what prophet Mohammad (pbuh) emphasized to his companions when returning from a military campaign, he told them: "*This day we have returned from the minor jihad (war) to the major jihad (self-control and betterment).*"

Jihad is not a declaration of war against other religions and certainly not against Christians and Jews as some media and political circles want it to be perceived. Islam does not fight other religions. Christians and Jews are considered as fellow inheritors of The Abrahamic traditions by Muslims, worshipping the same God and following the tradition of Abraham (pbuh).

The Prophet (pbuh) said: "The best Jihad is saying a word of truth in the court of a tyrant ruler".

We have to acknowledge again, for the sake of honesty, that historically all traditions, Muslim, Christian, Jew as well as others, had their lapses in honestly following the valued ideals of their religions or philosophies. We all made mistakes, and we still do. Muslims are no exception, and time and again religion was exploited by ambitious tyrants or violated by ignorant mobs. This is no reflection on religion, but it shows how desperately humanity is in need of better education, more enduring concern for human dignity, rights and freedom, and vigilant pursuit of justice, even at the price of curbing political and economic greed.

WOMEN HEADSCARF (HIJAB)

"Why do Muslim women have to cover their heads?" This question is one which is asked by Muslim and non-Muslim alike. For many women it is the truest test of being a Muslim.

The answer to the question is very simple - Muslim women observe HIJAB (covering the head and the body) because Allah has told them to do so.

"O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and the believing women to draw their outer garments around them (when they go out or are among men). That is better in order that they may be known (to be Muslims) and not harassed..." (Qur'an 33:59)

Other secondary reasons include the requirement for modesty in both men and women. Both will then be evaluated for intelligence and skills instead of looks and sexuality.

A Muslim woman who covers her head is making a statement about her identity. Anyone who sees her will know that she is a Muslim and has a good moral character. Many Muslim women who cover are filled with dignity and self esteem; they are pleased to be identified as a Muslim woman. As a chaste, modest, pure woman, she does not want her sexuality to enter into interactions with men in the smallest degree. A woman who covers herself is concealing her sexuality but allowing her femininity to be brought out.

The question of hijab for Muslim women has been a controversy for centuries and will probably continue for many more. Some scholars consider that covering the face is required, while the majority are of the opinion that it is not required. A middle line position is taken by some who claim that the instructions are vague and open to individual discretion depending on the situation.

The wives of the Prophet (pbuh) were required to cover their faces so that men would not think of them in sexual terms since they were the "Mothers of the Believers," but this requirement was not extended to other women.



The word "hijab" comes from the Arabic word "hajaba" meaning to hide from view or conceal. In the present time, the context of hijab is the modest covering of a Muslim woman. The question now is what is the extent of the covering?

The Qur'an says: "Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that will make for greater purity for them; and Allah is well acquainted with all that they do.

"And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; and that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands..." (Qur'an 24:30-31)

These verses from the Qur'an contain two main injunctions: (1) A woman should not show her beauty or adornments except what appears by uncontrolled factors such as the wind blowing her clothes, and (2) the head cover should be drawn so as to cover the hair, the neck and the bosom.

Islam has no fixed standard as to the style of dress or type of clothing that Muslims must wear. However, some requirements must be met. The first of

these requirements is the parts of the body which must be covered.

Islam has two sources for guidance and rulings: first, the Qur'an, the revealed word of Allah and secondly, the Hadith or the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who was chosen by Allah to be the role model for mankind. The following is a Tradition of the Prophet:

"Ayesha (R) reported that Asmaa the daughter of Abu Bakr (R) came to the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) while wearing thin clothing. He approached her and said: 'O Asmaa! When a girl reaches the menstrual age, it is not proper that anything should remain exposed except this and this. He pointed to the face and hands.'" (Abu Dawood)

The second requirement is looseness. The clothing must be loose enough so as not to describe the shape of the woman's body. One desirable way to hide the shape of the body is to wear a cloak over other clothes. However, if the clothing is loose enough, an outer garment is not necessary.

Thickness is the third requirement. The clothing must be thick enough so as not to show the colour of the skin it covers or the shape of the body.

Another requirement is an over-all dignified appearance. The clothing should not attract men's attention to the woman. It should not be shiny and flashy so that everyone notices the dress and the woman.

In addition there are other requirements:

- Women must not dress so as to appear as men.
- Women should not dress in a way similar to the unbelievers.
- The clothing should be modest, not excessively fancy and also not excessively ragged to gain others admiration or sympathy.

Often forgotten is the fact that modern Western dress is a new invention.

Looking at the clothing of women as recently as seventy years ago, we see clothing similar to hijab. These active and hard-working women of the West were not inhibited by their clothing which consisted of long, full dresses and various types of head covering. Muslim women who wear hijab do not find it impractical or interfering with their activities in all levels and walks of life.

Hijab is not merely a covering dress but more importantly, it is behaviour, manners, speech and appearance in public. Dress is only one facet of the total being.

The basic requirement of the Muslim woman's dress apply to the Muslim man's clothing with the difference being mainly in degree. Modesty requires that the area between the navel and the knee be covered in front of all people except the wife. The clothing of men should not be like the dress of women, nor should it be tight or provocative. A Muslim should dress to show his identity as a Muslim. Men are not allowed to wear gold or silk. However, both are allowed for women.

For both men and women, clothing requirements are not meant to be a restriction but rather a way in which society will function in a proper, Islamic manner.

This article is written by Mary C. Ali – The Institute of Islamic Information and Education, North America.



PRACTICAL NEEDS APPERTAINING TO MUSLIM REQUIREMENTS

Daily worship and Prayer

For Muslims, prayer, commonly known as *Salat* or *Namaz* is a regular and disciplined act of worship in which they humbly submit to God both mentally and physically. In prayer they praise and glorify God. They seek mercy, forgiveness and guidance from Him. The prayer takes the form of a series of rites which include standing, bowing, prostrating and sitting, and where memorised verses from the Quran are recited. Prayer is obligatory five times a day at stated periods; at dawn *Fajr*, at mid-day *Zuhr*, late afternoon *Asr*, after sunset *Maghrib*, and late evening before going to bed *Isha*. Muslims pray in the Mosque (*Masjid*) in congregation where they assemble and stand in rows behind the *Imam* who leads the prayer. Prayers can also be conducted at home or any place where it is convenient and clean. This can be in an office, factory, school or hospital. All that is required is a quiet, clean room allocated to them for this purpose.

In a hospital setting, if a patient is not mobile he or she may wish to pray on the bed in a sitting position or pray near the bedside using a prayer mat or a clean sheet. The patient may wish to draw the curtains during the prayer for privacy.

Ablution Facility

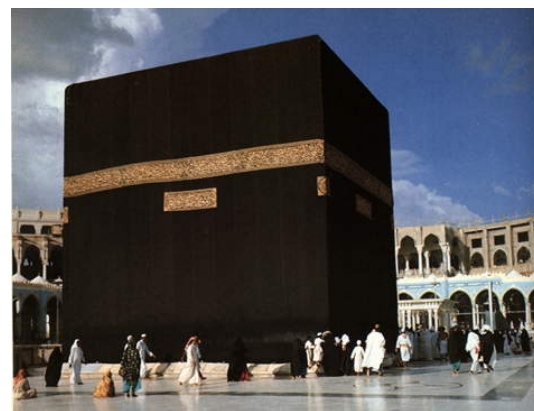
An ablution - *wudhu* is the term used for ritual washing and must be carried out before praying or reciting the Quran. It takes the form of washing the hands; gargling; rinsing the mouth and nostrils; washing the face and arms; passing wet hands over the hair; and lastly washing the feet up to the ankle. All Mosques have a special area where a person can carry out the Ablution. This is purpose built and takes into account the need to wash the feet, hence seating is usually lower. A normal wash hand basin is

adequate for performing the ablution but a person may need help if they are frail, elderly or weak. Also, Muslims have to wash in running water for bathing purposes; i.e. they would prefer a shower to a bath. A bucket and jug would serve this purpose. Picture shows a Muslim performing ablutions in a Mosque.



The Direction of the Qibla

For a Muslim to be able to pray, they must face the direction towards the *Qibla* in *Makkah*, Saudi Arabia. Hence, a compass is needed for this. It may be beneficial to put a sign up on the wall, say in a hospital setting, showing the direction of the *Qibla* permanently. This saves duplication and the need for a compass each time a new patient or visitor want to pray. Below is a picture of the Holy Mosque in Makkah.



Holy Book

The Holy *Quran* is the most important book for Muslims. The *Quran* should be handled after ablution *wudhu*. There are also English versions of the *Quran* but Muslims will read the *Quran* in the Arabic text as part of their worship.

It is important for non-Muslims to handle the *Quran* with care and respect and preferred wrapped in a cloth say in a court setting where an oath is required.

The month of Ramadhan

Ramadhan: the 9th month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims fast for the whole month from dawn to sunset. Fasting means abstention from food and drink, smoking and sexual activity. Fasting is not obligatory for the sick, the very old, the very young, for pregnant or breastfeeding women. The sick should make up the days they have missed at some other time. During this month Muslims will spend many hours in prayer and reading the *Quran*.

If Ramadan falls in the winter months during Office hours, it may be that Muslim employees will want to have time for breaking the fast and will bring some food from home.

Some employees may wish to take time off from work during some days of the Holy month and will certainly need to take leave during the *Eid* Festivals which is celebrated on the day immediately after the end of the Ramadhan.

The second major festival is *Eid-ul-Adha*, which is celebrated to commemorate Prophet Abraham's (pbuh) willing to sacrifice his son Ishmael (pbuh), in obedience to God's command. This festival falls on the day after the day of *Hajj*.

Diet and Hygiene

Halal meals

Many hospitals, Schools, and other public sector organisations have known the importance of providing Halal meals for Muslims. However, it is important to carry out a needs assessment or survey as the take up of the meals may not be high and many in hospitals prefer relatives to bring food from home. This is because the home made food is not only halal but more culturally appropriate. For example; Pakistani Muslims eat more Chappatis with curry as their staple diet, whereas Bangladeshis will have rice as their main meal. The way it is cooked, the traditional herbs and spices used also make a difference.

However, it is important to bear in mind that many second and third generation Muslims, will like an English meal; i.e. vegetables, fish, rice etc. They will avoid pork and meat that is not Halal. This includes gelatine and other animal products used in the cooking process, say for cakes, puddings and ice-cream. Many food products in supermarkets now have vegetarian labels on them and this is ideal as long as there is no alcoholic content such as wine added in.

A cleansing vessel

Most Muslims regard the use of toilet paper as insufficient in terms of personal hygiene and wash with water after using the toilet. Therefore running water and a cleansing vessel is used for this purpose. This could be in a form of a simple jug or ordinary watering can. As shown in the picture.

This vessel is used in the toilet for washing the private parts with water after urination and defecation. Some hospitals have seen the importance of this and have made available this facility. For hygiene purposes it would be required that the vessels be hung up on a hook to allow any water remaining to drain out.



Muslims will always use their left hand for toileting and their right hand for eating etc. This information is useful for medical staff when choosing the patients hand for intravenous drugs etc. Many Muslims would prefer the right hand to be used but it would be advisable to ask.

Visiting a Sick Relative in Hospital

Visiting a sick relative or friend is regarded as a virtuous act and is greatly rewarded by God. For this reason there may be a large number of people visiting a patient. It is part of the Muslim culture to visit the sick either in hospital or at home and to attend the funeral of a Muslim, even if they are not acquainted with the person. Of course a standard needs to be set and certain criteria established to avoid disruption, but hospital staff should take into account this information.

Birth

Birth ceremonies include the rites of Adhan and Iqamat, shaving of the head, naming and circumcision.

The *adhan* is the Muslim call to prayer. When a Muslim baby is born, it is bathed and the *adhan* is said softly into its right ear. The *iqamat* – part of the call to prayer is said into the left ear. If the baby is in an incubator a special instrument will need to be used. Soon after birth, a small amount of sugar or drop of honey is placed in the baby's mouth. The baby is named on the 7th day after birth. On the 7th day after birth the head of the baby is shaved, money given to charity and all boys circumcised.

Death in a Hospital setting

Where a death of a Muslim patient appears imminent, the relatives, or in their absence a member from the local Mosque committee, should be informed immediately and given facilities to perform the customary religious rites.

At this stage, the simple practice followed is to sit near the bed of the patient and to read some verses from the *Quran* and pray for the peaceful departure of the soul. The patient on the point of death should, if possible, be turned to face in the direction of the *Qibla*.

If the patient is in a state of consciousness, those relatives present at his bedside will like him or her to recite the *Shahadha* – the declaration of faith: “*La-Ellaha illal-Llah, Muhammadur Rauslu-Llah*” (There is no God except Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah). This is done to invoke the blessings of Allah and in the hope that Allah will accept his or her life as a Muslim and forgive sins in the hereafter.

When the patient has passed away, recitation of the Quran ceases in their presence. Immediately after death, relatives will want to:

- Close the eyes of the deceased.
- Close the mouth using a bandage
- Turn the body to the right and if possible towards the Qibla.
- Flex the joints of the arms and legs to stop them becoming rigid to enable washing and shrouding.
- At all times the deceased's body must be modestly covered.

The corpse should be handed over to the relatives or the Muslim community of the locality who will make arrangements for the washing, shrouding and burial according to Islamic regulations.

Burial

Muslims do not usually bury the corpse in a coffin, but if special circumstances apply or the law requires this, then Muslims will not object to adhering to this.

Islam recommends that burial takes place as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours. Family and community members will be grateful for the rapid release of the body.

A post-mortem should not be carried out unless required by law as this causes delay and distress. In fact, post-mortems without the existence of compelling medical or legal circumstances amounts to desecration of the body. It is for this reason that Muslims like to take custody of the remains as early as possible.

If relatives or members of the Muslim community are not readily available to take charge of the body, it may be kept

in a hospital mortuary for a short period of time. In handling the body, which should be modestly covered at all times, care should be taken not to offend the Muslim ethics. The female body should be handled by female staff and the male corpse by male staff where at all possible.

If in doubt or when needing clarification – it is advisable to ask!

Even if this takes place in the middle of the night – always ask! It is known that relatives of patients have been upset about staff not letting them know during the night.

CONCLUSION

Misunderstanding of Islam and Muslims occur often due to lack of awareness. The Media, over the years have been instrumental in portraying Islam in a very negative light. Despite this, many people in the Europe & North America embrace Islam.

This booklet is only a brief overview of Islam. There are many books available from Islamic Bookshops. See References/Further reading on last page.

If you are interested in finding out more about Islam and the Muslim Culture and the Islamic Cultural Awareness Course we run then please contact the office on 01924 466117 or email: info@educationislam.org You can also visit our website: www.educationislam.org

GLOSSARY OF ARABIC TERMS COMMONLY USED BY MUSLIMS

Greetings

Assalamo Allaikum
Peace be on you.

Wa' Alaikum As-Salam
Peace be on you also.

Khuda Hafiz
Good-bye.

Eid Mubarak
Happy Eid.

Invocations

Bismillah-ir-Rahmah-nir-Rahim
In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Insha-Allah
If Allah wills.

Alhamdulillah
Praise be to Allah.

Allahu-Akbar
Allah is the Greatest.

Jazakallah Khairan
May Allah reward you for your kindness.

Shukran or Shukriya
Thanks.

The five daily prayers

1. Fajr
This is the first daily prayer said early in morning after dawn.

2. Zuhr
Midday prayer.

3. Asr
Mid-afternoon prayer.

4. Maghrib

Prayer just after sunset.

5. Isha
Evening prayer, recommended before midnight.

Other Arabic terms

Adhan
Call to prayers (the five daily prayers)

Akhirah
The Hereafter.

Arkan
Pillars (of Islam).

Awrah
The private parts of the body which a Muslim should not expose.

Dunya
World/Worldly life.

Eid al-Adha
Festival of sacrifice.

Eid al-Fitr
Festival of breaking the fast Celebrated at the end of Ramadan.

Fard
Obligatory e.g. obligatory prayer.

Fiqh
Jurisprudence.

Ghusl
Complete bath after sexual intercourse or nocturnal emission.

Hadith
Reported traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Hajj
Pilgrimage to Makka.

Halal
Permitted. eg. *Halal* food.

Haram
Prohibited. eg. Alcohol is *Haram*.

Hifz
To memorise the Quran.

Ibadah

Ritual worship; but all good actions are an act of worship.

Iftar

Breaking the fast after sunset.

Imam

The person who leads the prayer: a religious leader.

Iman

Faith; conviction.

Islam

Submission and peace.

Jamaah

Congregational prayer.

Jihad

To struggle and strive for Islam -it is both an internal and external struggle.

Jumah

Friday.

Kabah

The House of Allah - focal point in Makkah towards which all Muslims turn to prayer.

Khalifah

God's representative on earth (an Honour given to man by God); the Caliph or head of the Muslim Government.

Mahr

Dowry paid to the wife by the husband. It is the compulsory part if the marriage contract and an exclusive property of the wife.

Makruh

Not forbidden, but strongly discouraged.

Mubah

Permitted through silence.

Qari

A reciter of the Quran; in a Melodious voice with proper rules of *Al-Tajwid* (the science of recitation of the Quran).

Qiblah

The direction towards which Muslims face in their prayers.

Quran

Literally means reading. The Last Divine Revelation of Allah to Prophet Mohammad through Angel Gabriel

Ramadan

The Muslims' sacred month of fasting; The ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar.

Rasul

Messenger. *Rasulallah* means the Messenger of Allah.

Risalah

The Prophethood. Beginning with Adam and finalised by Muhammad.

Sadaqah al-Fitr

The money paid to the needy before *Eid al-Fitr* by those who can afford, to enable the poor to participate in the Eid festivities.

Salah

Ritual prayer.

Salatul Jumah

Friday congregational prayer.

Sawm

Fasting. Particularly in Ramadan, but also during other times as well.

Shahadah

Testimony. Declaration of belief in The Oneness of Allah (*Tawhid*).

Shalwar

Trousers usually worn by Pakistani/Indian women.

Shariah

Islamic law contained within the Quran and the *Sunnah*.

Suhur

Early morning meal taken before dawn with the intention of fasting.

Sunnah

The sayings, actions and endorsements of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh).

Tarawih

Special night prayers during the month of Ramadan.

Tawhid

Unity. The basic concept of Islamic teaching of the Oneness of Allah.

Tayammum

The symbolic purification before prayer when running water is not available.

Umrah

Lesser Pilgrimage which can be performed at any time other than the days of *Hajj*.

Wajib

Expressly imposed but not obligatory as *Fard*.

Wudu

Ritual washing (purification) before prayers, which entails washing the face, arms, and feet

Zakah

Welfare due, given annually to the poor and distressed.

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- ❑ Useful websites: www.islamonline.net, www.soundvision.com, www.islamicity.com, www.channel4.com/hajj, www.educationislam.org

***For a free copy of the English translation of the Quran, please contact IDCI on 0121 3269598 or visit www.idci.co.uk**

NOTES