

## **Islam and Muslims in Nutshell**

- 1) Muslims are followers of Islam; and Islam as a true revealed religion, was started by Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*)<sup>1</sup> when he was at age of 40 years in 610AD. He was born on 8<sup>th</sup> June 570AD in the clan of Banu Hashim, of the Quraysh tribe, at Mecca, in Arabia. His father was Abdullah ibn Abd al-Muttalib, aged 24 and his mother was Amina bint Wahab, aged 17, and he was their only child.
- 2) Abdullah was a businessman. He imported spices from India and afterwards took the spices over to Syria, using camels, where he sold them to various shops. From the money he got from selling spices, he bought other new items, which he brought back with him and then sold them to shops in Mecca. There was no truck or motorcar in those days and he had to use a train of many camels in each trip. Abdullah's wife Amina, was pregnant when Abdullah departed for Syria.
- 3) On one such return trip to Mecca from Syria, Abdullah became sick and died. His camel rider servants buried him where he died. Amina did not know that Abdullah had died and that she was now a young widow of age 17. She had a dream about Abdullah. In her dream, she saw herself pregnant with lots of blue light rays moving away from her body to every country in the world. Then she saw herself in that dream: Abdullah telling her that she was pregnant with a son; and Amina must name him as Ahmad (*Ahmad means "one who praises much"*) and that Ahmad will be a great person. The camel servants finally reached back to Amina's home and they returned to her all the money, the new items Abdullah had purchased for selling in Mecca and all the camels. They told her that Abdullah had died and they had him buried. Amina paid them off and retained the balance and the camels for her survival.
- 4) After her baby was born, Amina named him Ahmad. Amina was now a young widow of age 17 with no income. It was customary amongst Arabians that a babysitter nurse must breastfeed babies of very young new mothers. All babysitter nurses refused Ahmad because his father was dead and no hope of their getting paid. A babysitter nurse by name of Halima took Ahmad.

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<sup>1</sup> (*pbuh* = peace be upon him) as a statement of respect for Prophet Muhammad.

Halima saw that Ahmad had a very special birthmark on his back left shoulder and understood it. When Ahmad was 4-years old, Halima returned Ahmad to his mother Amina.

- 5) Then 1-year later Amina took Ahmad to her father-in-law Abd al-Muttalib for Quraysh tribe's customary presentation of her baby to the family in Medina. Amina died on return trip back to Mecca in 576AD. The neighbours in Mecca took child Ahmad aged 5-6 years back to his grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib. The grandfather accepted the child Ahmad but changed his name from Ahmad to Muhammad (*Muhammad means "one who is much praised"*) in year 576AD. His grandfather died 2 years later in 578AD.
- 6) Muhammad never went to school and could not read and write. From then onwards, Muhammad lived with his grandfather's family and worked on the family farm as an animal herdsman, taking care of sheep, goats and camels. Muhammad was very honest and worked very hard and everybody liked him very much and respected him the title of *Al-Amin* (means *Truthful One*). He became very good friends with his uncle Abu Talib (d.619AD). When Muhammad was at age 25 he got married to a widow (Khadija) in the year 595AD. She was a businesswoman who operated big business of renting out camels.
- 7) For next 15 years Muhammad managed her camel rental business excellently. Muhammad was very religious and believed in One God only, same as the One God of Prophets: Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, Moses and Jesus. He used to pray in a hillside cave called Hira. In the third week of the month of Ramadan in year 610 AD, as Muhammad was praying, angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad in a vision as a man: Angel Gabriel asked Muhammad to recite after angel Gabriel some words in Arabic, since Muhammad could not read. Muhammad recited those words after angel Gabriel. Muhammad (*pbuh*) knew that God had appointed Him as His prophet.
- 8) That point became the beginning of Islam, as the final monotheistic Faith. Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) informed his wife and she was the first person to become a new Muslim. Slowly, as the years went by, his uncle Abu Talib and some other people became Muslims. However, many other people, who prayed to idols and statues as their gods, practised paganism and polytheism, did not want to become Muslims and pray to One God only; and so they wanted to kill Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*). This was in year 622AD.

- 9) In same year 622AD Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*), with Abu Bakr, escaped from their enemies in Mecca and went to Medina. That event became the Muslim New Year called *Hijra*. In year 629AD Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) returned with a host of 10,000 Muslim converts, took Mecca without bloodshed; and also took over the control of Kaba, the first and original house of worship. Kaba has always been the centre for people to perform pilgrimage to Mecca.
- 10) Muslims began to spread from Arabia to almost all the countries, all around the regions of Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Caspian Sea and Aral Sea in central Europe. In addition, Muslims began to spread all over continent of Africa, Middle East, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, India, Mongolia, South East Asian countries and today Muslims are in almost every country in the world. Out of the total world population of 7.9 Billion, 2.4 Billion alone are all Muslims (from UNFPA data).
- 11) According to the Holy Qur'an, Muslims are required to dress respectfully: Men must wear shirt and trousers. Women must also dress respectfully, with necessary showing of full face for recognition, both hands at wrists and both feet at ankles. Muslims are not allowed to wear see-through or very thin clothes and women must wear loose outer robes. *Burqa* and *hijab* are not prescribed requirements for Muslim woman anywhere in the Holy Qur'an; they are certain communities' innovations.
- 12) There are two main festivals for Muslims (1) *Eid-ul-Fitr*, which is the end of 1-month fasting for month of Ramadan and (2) *Eid-ul-Adza*, which is the festival of animal sacrifice, to celebrate Prophet Abraham's sincerity to God when asked to sacrifice his first born son (Ishmael). God then asked him to sacrifice a fattened lamb instead and put an end to practises of human sacrifice by pagans.
- 13) Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) could not read or write. He received divine revelations directly from God and later recited them to his followers, who immediately wrote them down for him. Over a period of 23 years, Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) kept receiving revelations from God and these have all been accumulated, arranged and formed the 114 Chapters of the Muslim scripture – the Holy Qur'an. Apart from being a revealed scripture, the Holy Qur'an is the Final Book of correct living, lists out correct things to do and all wrong things never to do. It is also the handbook of humanity and the

Constitution of Muslims. The Holy Qur'an is always original and never changed or altered since 610AD.

- 14) The Holy Qur'an is the Last and Final revealed Holy Scripture and there will never be another scripture after that. Muslims must observe and practice the 5-pillars in Islam: (1) Believe in One God (2) Pray 5 times daily (3) Practise charity and give out *Zakat* (i.e. alms administration for the poor) at least (1/40<sup>th</sup>) or 2½% of net wealth and net savings (4) Fasting in month of Ramadan (5) Perform pilgrimage (called *Hajj*).
- 15) Muslims must never worship: idols, statues, and any people (died or alive) or anything other than One God. Muslims must never consume anything as offerings made to any idol, statue, people or anything used in such worship. There is no traditional food for Muslims. Muslims are allowed to eat foods of all communities except offerings (as above), flesh of pigs, and flesh of any animal which died by itself or killed in animal fights; and flesh of any animal, birds or poultry, which are not halal according to Muslim slaughter with prayer. Muslims are allowed to eat all seafood and all eggs. Islam means "submission to peace" and Muslims are required living peacefully amongst themselves and live most peacefully with all other communities in all countries. Muslims must not tell lies or fabricate or start problems by being aggressive.
- 16) Terrorism is not allowed to Muslims because terrorism is political ploy by failed politicians, and not allowed in the religion of Islam. If Muslims are attacked then Muslims must fight back in self-defence, but when the aggressor stops, then Muslims must also stop and reach peaceful agreement (*Treaty*). Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) died after a short illness on his 63<sup>rd</sup> birthday, on 8<sup>th</sup> June 632AD in Medina. Prophet Muhammad died (*pbuh*) after fully completing the Holy Qur'an and his mission as the Final Prophet of God.
- 17) Muslims never worship Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) and he remains as the Last and Final Prophet and there will never be another prophet after the death of Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) in 632AD. There will never be another revealed religion after Islam. Finally, there will never be another revealed scripture after the completion of the Holy Qur'an.

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