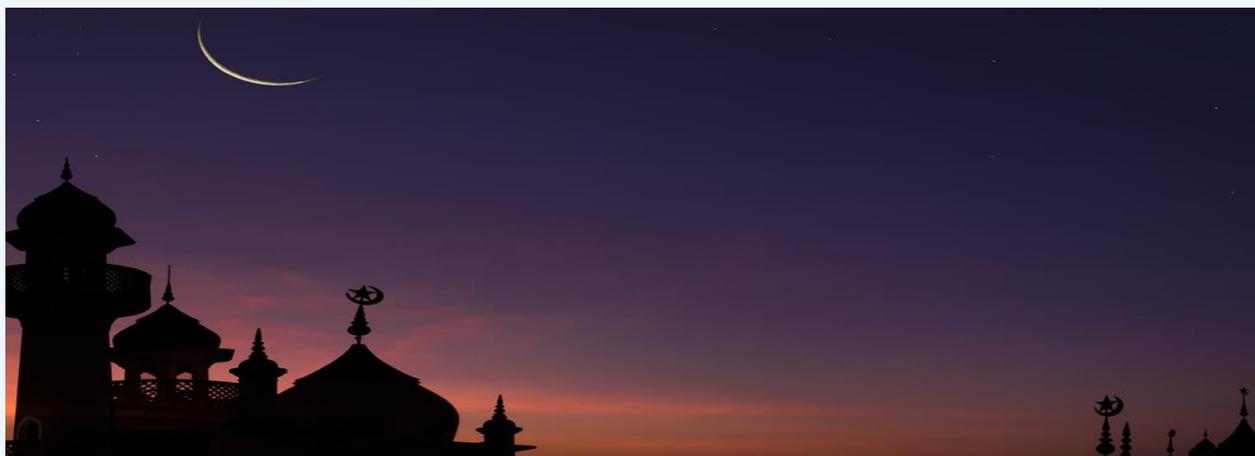


THE **Oomph!** DIGEST

Muharram



Muharram marks the first month of the Islamic calendar, meaning that for many practitioners, it represents new beginnings and hope for the future. Muharram is one of four holy months described in the Quran. It is thought that during Muharram, good deeds are multiplied and bad decisions become more serious. It is often referred to as the month of Allah.

Muharram features Ashura, a day when Muslims are encouraged to fast for great rewards. The word 'Muharram' is an Arabic term which can be loosely translated to 'forbidden'. The festival also marks the anniversary of the battle of Karbala in which Iman Husayn, Muhammad's grandson, was killed. It also celebrates the journey of Mohammad from Mecca to Medina.

Muharram Traditions

During Muharram, and the first 10 days of Safar (the month after Muharram), families are encouraged to not wear very bright colours with some participants only wearing black. In many households, women will avoid wearing obvious makeup and jewellery. Some households will lean towards simple meals and avoid elaborate luxuries. During this time, some practitioners will read the book of Ziarat Ashura which features salutations to the Martyrs of Karbala. Muslims may celebrate the New Year by visiting the mosque and praying to Allah. Some Shia Muslims engage in mourning rituals to mark the sadness of Iman Husayn's death.



From Mecca to Medina



Known as hijra, this time celebrates The Prophet and his companions' movement from Mecca to Medina. In Medina, they were able to practise their religion more freely and openly. It is a time for reflection, remembrance and gratitude. It is thought that on September 24th 622, Muhammad completed his Hegira, loosely translated to 'flight'. Upon arriving in Medina, Mohammad began to build an organised community of his followers. Muhammad had been born in Mecca around 520.

Muhammad's father died before he was born with his mother, when he was just six, leaving the religious leader under the tutelage of his uncle Abu Talib. As an adult, Muhammad would sometimes spend the night in a cave at Mount Hira thinking about the problems that plagued the city. It is in this cave that he heard from the Angel Gabriel that he was a messenger of God. At the time, Medina was an oasis community around 200 miles North of Mecca.

Lunar Cycles

Muharram is calculated by the lunar cycle, which means that it does not follow the Gregorian calendar. This is why the Islamic New Year does not land in January. The Islamic calendar also has 12 months, but only consists of 354 days. This calendar is known as Hijrah and it differs slightly from traditional lunar calendar which are based around astrological calculations, whereas the Hijrah is based on the visibility of the moon.

Muharram Foods

Ashura, or 'The Porridge of Plenty' is thought to have been the last meal consumed by Imam Husayn and his followers before the battle of Karbala. It is a mix of grains, rose water, cashews and raisins.

In order to pay respects to Imam Husayn's soldiers who were denied water after their defeat, some Muslims make the popular drink Doodh ka Sharbat. This is a mix of milk, almonds and pistachios.

The Mourning of Muharram



Shia Muslims mourn during Muharram in order to pay their respects to the loss of life experienced at the battle of Karbala. Some followers will wear black, create re-enactments of the battle, openly weep, beat their chests and take part in street processions. During this time, Imam Hussain will be referred to as The Prince of Martyrs and it is believed that these public displays of grief will be valuable when it comes to The Day Of Judgement. These gestures of mourning are referred to as Matam.

Annually, over 1 million people will take the pilgrimage to The Shrine of Husayn. Sometimes, these mourning rituals will be performed in a Hussainiya, which is a kind of congregation hall where people can gather together. As this is a time when actions are weighed more heavily (good and bad), many followers use it to establish good habits .

Sacred Dates On The Lunar Calendar

The four months that are considered sacred in the Islamic calendar are Muharram, Rajab, Dhul Qa'dah and Dhul Hijja.

Rajab – The seventh month of the lunar calendar.

Dhul Qa'dah – The eleventh month of the lunar calendar.

Dhu'l-Hijja – The final month of the lunar calendar.

Interesting Facts About Muslim Culture

- The term Muslim is loosely translated to ‘surrender’ or ‘submission’.
- The Muslim faith is the second biggest religion in the world.
- Known as Salat, some Muslims incorporate prayer into their day 5 times.
- The Islamic calendar starts in 622 AD.
- Indonesia has the largest Muslim population.
- Mary, the mother of Jesus is the only woman mentioned by name in the Quran.

QUIZ ANSWERS:
1) b, 2) a, 3) a, 4) c, 5) b

Digest Quiz

- 1. Where was Mohammad Born?**
 - a) Jerusalem
 - b) Mecca
 - c) South America
- 2. What breakfast food did Imam Hussain eat before battle?**
 - a) Porridge
 - b) Cereals
 - c) Soup
- 3. What relationship did Imam Husayn have to prophet Mohammad?**
 - a) Grandson
 - b) Brother
 - c) Best Friend
- 4. Numerically, what month does Muharram mark in the Muslim calendar?**
 - a) 8th
 - b) 12th
 - c) 1st
- 5. Who told Mohammad that he was a ‘messenger of God’?**
 - a) The Egyptian Pharaoh
 - b) The Angel Gabriel
 - c) The King

Word Scramble Puzzle

Can you unscramble this selection of scrambled words related to all things Muharram?

1. MHAUARMR
2. DMMMAOAH
3. SAUARH
4. LSMUIM
5. SGFATIN
6. MILSA
7. MCCA
8. NAIDME
9. LIONGIER
10. RINGNOMU

Did You Know?

Muharram is one of the four months when warfare is completely forbidden.

Word Scramble Answers:
 1. MUHARRAM, 2. MOHAMMAD, 3. ASHURA,
 4. MUSLIM, 5. FASTING,
 6. ISLAM, 7. MECCA, 8. MEDINA,
 9. RELIGION, 10. MOURNING

What Have You Learnt About Muharram Today?

Jot down as many as possible!

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

