

## **5 Pillars Description**

### **Shahaadah (testimony of faith)**

The "Shahaadah" or "testimony of faith" is the greatest of the pillars of Islam. It consists of the utterance of the words "La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadur rasoolu Allah" meaning "There is none worthy of worship except Allah(God), and Muhammad(the prophet and founder of the Islam religion) is the messenger of Allah(God)." Pious Muslims believe that the utterance of these words with utmost conviction by a Muslim at least once in his or her life is the true declaration of his/her faith. The importance of this pronouncement is the belief that the sole aim of the life of a follower of Islam is to serve and obey God, and this is achieved through abidance to the teachings and practices of Prophet Muhammad, the messenger of Allah.

### **Salat (prayer)**

The Salat (prayer) is held to be an act of direct correspondence between the worshipper and God and forms a vital part of the daily Muslim life. Worshipful Muslims perform five prayers every day: at dawn, noon, mid- afternoon, sunset and night. Though a mosque is the place where prayers are typically performed, a Muslims may pray anywhere - inside their home or outside, in schools, [workplaces](#) or elsewhere. Each of the five prayers take only a few minutes for its performance and consist of the utterance of some important verses from the Qur'an in [Arabic](#), the language in which the holy knowledge was said to be revealed to Prophet Muhammad. There are however, no rule to be followed in personal prayers and one can wish to pray to God in his/her own language. In the mosques, prayers are performed in Arabic under the guidance of a person well versed in the Quran. The concept of priests does not exist in Islam and traditionally the person to lead the prayer is chosen by the congregation.

## **Zakat (almsgiving)**

According to Islam, everything belongs to God and human beings are only entrusted with the possession of [wealth](#). By giving a fixed part of his possessions to needy persons, the wealth of a Muslim is supposed to be "purified" and it is also believed to increase. Thus, charity, or "Zakat", is an important pillar of Islam faith. In ancient days, every Muslim capable of making a donation had to set aside a certain amount of his earnings as "zakat", which was collected by the Muslim "Calipha" (the civil and religious leader of a Muslim state) at the end of every year. This rule has been done away with in present era and is dependent only upon the individual discretion of a Muslim, except in Saudi [Arabia](#), where one must give "Zakat" as per the law of the country.

## **Sawm (fasting)**

In Islamic tradition, much importance is attached to the ritual of Sawm (fasting). The ninth month of the Islamic calendar, Ramadan, is supposed to be a time when Muslims should fast during the entire daytime eating only after sundown and in the hours prior to dawn. The whole month is a time when Muslims should not only keep themselves away from foods but also abstain from drinking and engaging in sexual activities. The purpose of "Sawm" and the related activities is to sever the body from all worldly pleasures for a month and concentrate the mind on [spiritual](#) thoughts and purifying actions that take one closer to God. It is also held to be a kind of penance for one's sins. However, the sick, elderly people, pregnant or menstruating women are allowed to break the fast and are advised to keep it for a similar number of days at any other time of the year if their health permits.

## **Hajj (pilgrimage)**

The Hajj (pilgrimage) is held to be one of the most important pillars of the Islam religion. This holy journey to Mecca is undertaken during the Islamic month of "Dhu al-Hijjah". One of the capitals of Saudi Arabia, Mecca is located in the western part of the country. It is highly regarded as the birthplace of Muhammad and is considered to be the holiest city for the followers of Islam. As per the Islamic faith, every Muslim male and female who is physically and financially able to do so must make the "hajj" to Mecca at least once in their lifetime. For any Muslim, the "hajj" is a matter of great importance and honour and on completion of the pilgrimage he/she is highly revered in his/her community as a "haji", meaning "pilgrim (to [Mecca](#))". A "haji" is required to follow certain custom during the "Hajj", the most prominent of which include dressing in two white sheets when within 10 kilometers from Mecca, walking around the Kaaba for seven times, touching the Black Stone, travelling seven times between Mount Safa and Mount Marwah, and throwing stones in Mina as a gesture of cursing the Devil (and thus cleansing the mind of all evils).