Mohammad Naeemullah Khan (OB-53)

What is Islam? What are the salient features of Islam?

Introduction:

Islam is a monotheistic Abrahamic religion founded in the 7th century CE by the Prophet Muhammad in the Arabian Peninsula. It is based on the belief in the oneness of God (Allah in Arabic) and the guidance provided by the Quran, which Muslims believe to be the word of God as revealed to Muhammad. Islam encompasses a comprehensive way of life that governs spiritual, moral, social, and legal aspects.

Literal Meaning:

The term "Islam" originates from the Arabic root word "s-l-m," which carries the meaning of "submission" or "surrender."

Contextual Meaning:

In the context of the religious belief system, Islam refers to the complete submission of one's will to the will of God (Allah in Arabic). It encompasses a comprehensive way of life that governs spiritual, moral, social, and legal aspects. Islam is based on a set of beliefs and practices that guide Muslims in their relationship with God, fellow humans, and the world around them.

Scholarly Definitions of Islam:

Dr. Hameedullah:

Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah, a prominent Islamic scholar, defined Islam as follows: "Islam is an Arabic word which means 'surrender, submission, commitment, and peace.' As a religion, it is a complete code of life covering every sphere of human activity."

Imam Ghazali:

Imam Al-Ghazali, a renowned Islamic theologian and philosopher, described

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Islam as: "It is the highest wisdom to recognize that our weal or woe depends on our good or bad deeds, and thereby to gain control over our future by paying strict attention to our morality."

Sadar uddin Islahi:

Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi, a contemporary Islamic scholar, provided a comprehensive definition: "Islam is a comprehensive system which deals with all spheres of life. Its teachings are not confined to a specific department or segment of life. Islam is a unique code of life which embraces every field of human activities."

Oxford Dictionary:

The Oxford English Dictionary defines Islam as: "The religion of the Muslims, a monotheistic faith regarded as revealed through Muhammad as the Prophet of Allah." Salient features of Islam include:

Monotheism (Tawhid):

The core belief in the oneness of God is the foundation of Islam. This is exemplified in the Quran in verses such as: "Say, 'He is Allah, [who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent.'" (Qran, Surah Al-Ikhlas, 112:1-4)

Prophet Muhammad:

Muslims consider Muhammad to be the final prophet, sent to convey God's message to humanity. His life and teachings are recorded in the Quran and the Hadith (sayings and actions attributed to him).

Submission to God (Islam):

The term "Islam" itself means submission to the will of God. Muslims believe that submitting to God's guidance leads to peace and fulfillment. The Quran

states: "And whoever submits his face to Allah while being a doer of good - then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold." (Qran, Surah Luqman, 31:22)

The Quran:

Muslims believe the Quran to be the ultimate source of guidance. It covers various aspects of life, including morality, ethics, law, and spirituality. It emphasizes compassion, justice, and righteousness.

Five Pillars of Islam:

These are the core practices that shape a Muslim's life:

Shahada (Faith):

Declaration of faith in the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad.

Salat (Prayer):

Regular prayers performed five times a day to maintain a connection with God.

Zakat (Charity):

Giving a portion of one's wealth to those in need.

Sawm (Fasting):

Fasting during the month of Ramadan to develop self-discipline and empathy.

Hajj (Pilgrimage):

Performing a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca at least once in a lifetime, if possible.

6. Morality and Ethics:

Islam emphasizes ethical behavior, honesty, kindness, and compassion

towards all creation. The Prophet Muhammad said, "The best among you are those who have the best manners and character." (Shih al-Bukhari)

7. Social Justice:

Islam encourages the equitable distribution of wealth, care for the less fortunate, and the pursuit of justice. The Quran says, "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives." (Qran, Surah An-Nisa, 4:135)

8. Respect for Humanity:

Islam emphasizes the dignity of all human beings, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or social status. The Prophet Muhammad said, "All of you are from Adam and Adam is from dust. People should stop boasting about their ancestors." (Snan Ibn Majah)

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Islam is a profound and comprehensive faith that provides spiritual guidance, moral principles, and a framework for living a purposeful life. Rooted in the belief in the oneness of God and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, Islam emphasizes submission to God's will, compassion for others, and a commitment to justice and equity. The Quran and Hadith serve as primary sources of guidance, offering insights into a wide range of aspects, from individual spirituality to social justice. The Five Pillars of Islam lay the foundation for a disciplined and ethical lifestyle, while the principles of monotheism, respect for humanity, and social responsibility underscore its core values. As Muslims navigate the complexities of the modern world, these salient features continue to guide them in their pursuit