

What is Islam? Enlist the salient features of Islam.

Introduction:

Islam is an Arabic word derived from the root word "SLM", which means peace. The word Islam means submission, surrender to the will of Allah and obedience to his laws. Islam is the only religion accepted and blessed by Allah.

"Surely in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find comfort." 13:28

Explanation:

The above ayat clearly explains the connection of both the meanings of Islam. One can only attain peace by submitting himself to the will of Allah.

Islam in the light of Shariah:

Allah created Islam for the creation to surrender themselves for the creator and practice Islam as an individual, family, community or state. By devoting oneself completely to the will of Allah, a Muslim can achieve success in this world and the Hereafter. Islam is a religion practiced by Holy Prophet (PBUH) and all the prophets who preceded him. Allah says in the verse 112 of Surah baqarah:

"Nay whoever submits his wholeself to Allah and is a doer of good - He will get his reward with his Lord; on such

shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

Islam is a true religion. Allah revealed its verses to the Holy prophet (PBUH) in parts through Hazrat Jibreel (AS). Islam is an ultimate source of guidance and complete code of life. Allah says in verse 19 of Surah Imran:

"Truly, the religion with Allah is Islam."

In Surah Ma'idah, Allah says:

"I have perfected your religion for you, completed my favours upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (5: 3)

According to Holy Prophet (PBUH) definition of Islam, that is:

"To bear the witness of Allah and his messengers."

The basic concept of Islam is to believe in the oneness of Allah (Tawhid) and his messengers (Prophethood). Allah sent messengers for the guidance of people, the last one of which is Holy Prophet (PBUH).

According to Imam Ghazali, a famous Muslim scholar:

"Islam is a combination of rights of Allah and rights of people."

Concept of Islam:

The basic concept of Islam is to believe in the oneness of Allah. Allah is the sole creator of this ~~universe~~ universe. He has created man and after a certain period of time, every person will return back to him. Allah has send messengers for the guidance of mankind. One who chooses to follow the path of Allah becomes a Muslim (believer), and the one who refuses becomes a kafir (non-believer).

1. Islamic concept of Tawhid:

Tawhid is the basic pillar or starting point of Islam. Tawhid means to believe in the unity of God. Literally, Tawhid means unification, derived from the Arabic word "Wahada" meaning to unite or unify. The first part of kalimah explains the concept of Tawhid. It states:

"There is no God except Allah."

Tawhid means to believe Allah is one, absolute and eternal. He is the only creator of this entire universe, consisting of galaxies, stars and planets. He does not need anyone's assistance to administer it. Allah is omniscient. He knows it all, whether hidden or evident. Surah Ikhlas explains the oneness of Allah as:

"Say, "He is God, the one. God, the Absolute. He begets not, nor was he begotten. And there is nothing comparable to him." (112:1-4)

2. Prophethood:

Prophethood means to have a firm belief that Allah has sent prophets for the guidance of mankind and Holy Prophet (PBUH) was the last prophet. This is the second most important pillar of Islam. The second part of kalimah states:

"Muhammad is the messenger of God."

Prophets are sent to practically implement the orders of Allah in their lives and becoming a role model for mankind. Quran says:

"Every messenger who was sent by us was sent for the purpose that he should be obeyed under the sanctions of Allah." (4:69)

The code of ~~is~~ behaviour, law that distinguishes the right and wrong is called Shariah. Shariah is based on Quran and Sunnah. Holy Prophet (PBUH) is the last messenger of Allah. After him, prophethood has been sealed. This is explained in Quran as:

"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the messenger of Allah and the seal of the Prophets." (33:40)

Holy prophet (PBUH) was sent to guide the Muslims, to help them find the truth path. To teach them and help them in every sphere of life.

"Verily, I have been sent as a teacher to mankind."

3. Islam a Universal Deen:

The message of Islam is for the entire mankind. In Islam, everyone is equal irrespective of their caste, colour, language and creed. Islam is not a time bounded religion. It implies to all times past, present or future, in all regions and for ethnicities. It guides in every aspect of life.

4. Islam a simple practical religion:

The teachings of Islam are simple and easy to implement. Islam is based on three basic features that are

- ① Unity of God
- ② the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH)
- ③ concept of life after death.

Islam is free of myths and superstitions and is based on logic. Islam encourages man to use his intellect. Allah says in the Quran:

"He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty."
22:78

Islam is a practical religion. It emphasizes that its teachings must be practiced. Allah says in the Quran:

"For those who believe and work righteousness, is (every) blessedness, and a beautiful place of final return." (13:29)

5. Islam a complete code of life:

Islam is a complete way of life. It is a source of complete guidance in every aspect and age of life. From birth till death, Islam guides in social, political, moral, education, cultural and economical issue. For example, when a child is born, Adhan is whispered in the baby's right ear. Similarly, aqiqah, shaving baby's head are all parts of Islamic rituals. Islam guides in every aspect from ^{one} generation to the other.

6. Balance between Individual and Society:

Islam establishes a balance between Individual and Society. It regards that every person have an individual personality and is directly responsible to God. Development of a man's personality is one of the most important objective of its educational policy. In Quran Allah says:

"Man shall have nothing but what he strives for." (53:39)

Islam has created a sense of responsibility in man by creating morals and laws to ensure social peace and brotherhood. For example, offering prayer in mosque, zakat, jihad.

7. Humanity in Islam:

Humanity is defined as a natural instinct without any discrimination of love, care, welfare, tolerance, patience, sympathy, empathy and fulfillment of human and animal rights.

In Islam, there is no barrier of colour, caste, creed or wealth. Everyone is equal. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

"All creatures of God forms the family of God and he is the best loved of God who loveth His creatures."

Islam emphasizes that both men and women are equal. Before the advent of Islam, women were brutally tortured and killed, Islam prohibited this and alcohol, gambling and other immoral activities. Allah says in the Quran:

"Whosoever kills an innocent human being, it shall be as if he has killed all mankind, and whosoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he has saved the life of all mankind." (5:32)

8. Charity:

Spending a portion of money for the welfare of mankind is called charity or Zakat. Zakat is an obligatory worship. Allah says in the Quran that:

"The alm-seeker and the destitute have their due rights in their wealth." (51:19)

Charity begins at home. Zakat is given to deserving relatives at the first place. After them, comes the neighbours and then state.

9. Unity of matter and spirit:

Islam does not divide life into the compartments of matter and spirit. It stands for the fulfillment of life. Islam does not prohibit man from material things. Islam emphasizes on character building and producing a moral man to serve society.

10. Justice:

Islam has always been a strong supporter of justice in the society. In Islam, justice means equality of rights and duties. It is not permissible to oppress the poor and use the property of orphans. In Islam, the rules of justice are same, both for rich and poor and whoever deviates from these rules, strays from the right path. Allah says in Quran:

"O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents or relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted."