

Islamic Studies

Explain how Islam is different in terms of its fundamentals and characteristics from other religions of the world.

Introduction:

"Surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam" (Al-Imran)
Islam is a code of life which Allah, the Creator of heavens and the Earth, has revealed for the guidance of mankind.

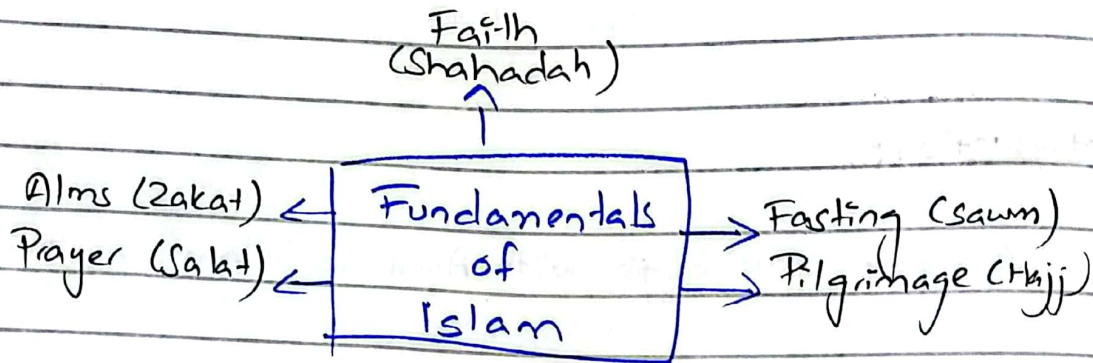
Allah has bestowed humanity with resources and knowledge to dwell in this world. Islam remains the true religion distinct from all other religions of the world. Its fundamentals including prayers, Zakat, Fasting, Pilgrimage differ from other religions. Also Islamic characteristics of universality, completeness and moderation stand distinct from the rest.

Islam is a universal and eternal religion. A Muslim is in direct communication with Almighty Allah. ~~where ever~~ In Islam, normal day to day tasks are considered as worship. It stipulates moderation and tolerance. It stands for equality of mankind.

The ~~Quranic text in Arabic is~~ language of Quran is alive and its teachings are valid to this day.

Therefore, Islam is in every way poles apart from the rest of the religions.

Distinctive aspects of Fundamentals of Islam



There are five fundamentals of Islam. They are also known as the five pillars of Islam. They include Shahadah, Salat (Everyday prayer), Zakat (Alms giving), Fasting Saum (Fasting in the month of Ramadan), and Pilgrimage (Hajj) (Holy Pilgrimage). These are the fundamentals without which Islam cannot stand.

1- Faith (Shahada) :-

A Muslim testifies that there is no God but Allah. He recites Kalima: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad (PBUH) is His Prophet". Shahadah emphasises in the unity of Allah whereas the other religion do not accept unity of God. Hinduism is a polytheist religion with a number of deities. Similarly Christianity calls for two gods and associate Jesus with as the son of god.

2- Prayers (Salat):-

↑ Muslims pray five compulsory prayers. There are also optional and other compulsory congregational prayers. Quran says, "worship at fixed hours hath been enjoined on the believers". Other religions pray once or weekly. Christians observe worship on Sundays of every week. In Hinduism, there is no set time or day for worship.

3- Alms giving (Zakat):-

Islam calls for an obligatory almsgiving. According to the Quran, Zakat purifies wealth. A system of Zakat is essential for an Islamic state. The nisab of Zakat is clearly mentioned in Quran. Whereas, in other religions, alms giving is restricted to charity only.

4. Fasting (Sawm):-

"Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you" (Quran). Muslims are obligated to fast in Ramadan, from Fajr to Maghrib. Whereas in Christianity fasting is done for 24 hours in specified seasons. Similarly, fasting differs in the rest of the religions too.

5. Pilgrimage (Hajj):-

"Pilgrimage there to is a duty men owe to Allah" (Quran). Allah has made Hajj compulsory for those who can afford it with their wealth and health. Hajj is performed once a year while Umrah is performed

throughout the year. It is performed in Mecca. & while the rest of the religions consider their pilgrimage as optional.

Distinctive characteristics of Islam :-

1. A Universal Religion :-

Islam is a universal religion. It is for all time, for all people and for all places. It is an all inclusive religion. George Bernard Shaw in The Genuine Islam writes that Islam has the capacity to assimilate with the changing phases of existence which makes its appeal to every age. Islam is therefore open to all people and it can be adopted anywhere. On the other hand, Hindus and Jews can only be born in their respective religions. No one can convert in their religion.

2. A Complete Religion :-

"Today I have perfected the religion onto you and completed my favor onto you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion". (Quran). Islam gives guidelines for all aspects of life from individual level to transnational level. It is complete in all forms.

3 - Direct Relationship with Almighty :-

Muslims pray directly to Allah. The form - their individual relationship with Allah. There is no -third-party for communication with the God. Allah is closer to Muslims -than -themselves. While in other religions like Christianity, communication is done through Pope.

4. Unique Concept of Worship :-

Muslims can worship in various ways. Salat is only one form of worship. Islam recognises truthfulness, integrity, obedience to parents, kindness, mediation in conflicts etc to be worship too. All good deeds are considered as worship in Islam. While in other religions, worship is restricted to prayers only.

5. Living language of Quran :-

Quran is the only Holy Book whose language i.e. Arabic is still alive. It is widely spoken in Middle East. While Hebrew, the language of Bible is not spoken anywhere in the world. Similarly Sanskrit of Vedas of Hinduism is a dead language. Only Arabic is alive today and flourishing. Therefore, its message is well understood by the believers. Quran says, "It is a Quran in Arabic without any crookedness therein".

6- Fastest growing religion:

Islam is the fastest growing religion of the world. Even though Christianity is the most followed religion but it is declining while Islam is the fastest growing religion and remain so. By 2050, number of Muslims will be equal to number of Christians (The Future of the World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050).

7- Supported by Reason:-

Islamic teachings are supported by reason and explanation. The Quran has accurately taught the Muslims and sciences have confirmed it. From relativity, quantum mechanics, embryology to geology and thermodynamics are all found in Quran.

8- Practical religion:-

Islam is practical and well-balanced. Islam can be followed easily with 5 daily prayers, fasting in one month and perform all other worship can be performed without denouncing the world.

9- Natural Religion:-

Islam guides the believers to chose moderation and balanced path. It does not oppose human nature. Infact, Islam

is based on human nature. A Muslim do not denounce the world but rather creates balance between the existing and after life. Prof.

H.A.R. Gib says, Islam maintains "the balance between exaggerated opposites (body and spirit)".

10. No compulsion :-

Quran says that there is "no compulsion in religion". Following Islam and its guidelines are a choice that people take. No one can be compelled to accept Islam. Holy Prophet (PBUH) attracted people to Islam and compelled no one.

11. Equality of mankind :-

Islam calls for complete equality of mankind. No one is superior in Islam except for piety. No Arab is superior to non-Arab and vice versa. Even slaves should be treated with equality in Islam. They should be fed and clothed with the same things as their employers. Whereas there is a strict cast system in Hinduism who look down upon on the lower castes i.e. untouchables.

12. Gender equality :-

Islam gives equality to both men and women. Both are given exalted status of Ashraf-ul-Makhloqat. Both must be respectful to one another. On the other hand Christians blame eve for "the original sin"

whereas Quran blames both Adam and Eve for non-compliance of Allah's order. Similarly Quran Islam gives women ~~five~~ an exalted status as mothers whereas Christianity calls ~~it~~ motherhood (giving birth) to be punishment of the sin of Eve.

Conclusion :-

Islam as a religion has a distinct personality from all other religions. It stands alone and guides believers to the righteous path. Islam is extremely humane. It is different from all religions in its fundamentals as well as other characteristics.

"Say: He, Allah, is One. Allah is He on whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And none is like Him."