

NAME: AIMEN AZHER ABBASI

29522 - OB - 052

Q. What is Islam? Enlist the salient features of Islam.

ANSWER:

"ISLAM"

1) Literal Meaning of Islam:

Islam is an Arabic word which has been first used by The Almighty Allah in The Holy Quran.

It originates from the root word S-L-M or Salam which means "peace". It is also translated as "submission" or "to surrender".

Thus the word Islam can be interpreted as "entering into peace by submitting to Allah SWT."

2) CONTEXTUAL MEANING OF ISLAM:

Islam means to enter into a state of peace by surrendering your desires and submitting to the will of The Almighty Allah.

Islam refers to resigning one's control and desires and committing oneself to the rules set out by Allah.

•) SHARIAH MEANING OF ISLAM:

Shariah defines Islam as the voluntary submission of desires to the will of Allah SWT.

Allah mentions in the Quran;

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

"For you is your religion and for me is mine" (Al Quran, 140: 6).

Shariah has defined Islam as a way of living in which an individual voluntarily chooses to commit himself to the rules set out by Allah to live a dignified life.

Allah mentions in the Quran in Surah Al-Baqarah,

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي دِينِكُمْ

"There is no compulsion in the religion"
(Al-Quran, 2:256).

•) ISLAM AS DEFINED BY HADITH:

Islam was revealed as a way of life in the form of The Holy Quran. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was a living embodiment of Islam.

According to the Hadith of Jibrā'il:

"Islam is to testify that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad (PBUH) is the Messenger of Allah, to establish the prayer, pay the zakaat, to observe the fast of Ramadan and perform the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do so."

It has been mentioned in The Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

"It is only prayer that distinguishes between a muslim and a non-believer" (Muslim, Imam 134)

Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah has defined Islam in the following words.

"Islam is a monotheist deen revealed through Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)".

According to the words of Imam Ghazali:

"Islam is combination of two things, the rights of Allah and the rights of people."

Mawlana Saday Uddin Islahi has said,

"Islam is a collection of our faiths and Rituals".

If we want to understand Islam we can only do it through the Quran. Quran comprises of two major types of Surahs. The Makki Surahs and the Madni Surahs.

The Makki collection of Surahs gives us a detailed account of the major beliefs of Islam.

The Prophet PBUH said,
"Iman means that you believe in Allah, in His angels, in His books, in His messengers, in the Day of Judgement and in the Divine Decree and in good and evil" (Sahih Muslim).

Whereas the Madni Surahs include a comprehensive detail of the Islamic rituals, submission to which is an essential part of Islam.

ISLAM IS A UNIVERSAL DEEN:

It is by no means logical that a system of life sent for the salvation of the mankind by Allah to be allotted to a handful of people for a certain cause only at a specific time in nature.

Rather Islam is a universal deen. Its universality extends into its practical application as well as strengthening the faith in the divinity of The Almighty.

There are four major reasons to believe that Islam is a universal religion:

1) It guides us in every aspect of life:
- Islam was gifted to us in the form of the Quran and then practically exemplified by The Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAWW).

Thus it gave us a detailed instructions in individual, collective, social as well as the political lives. Allah mentions in The Quran,

"We have not sent you (Muhammad) but as a mercy to all the nations"
(Al-Quran 21: 107).

2) It is not a time bound religion:

The rulings, and teachings of Islam are not contained to a specific time period. The eternal commands of Allah as prescribed in The Holy Quran are a living proof that they are applicable to every generation in every walk of life. In Surah Al-Hijr Allah says:

"Indeed, it is We, who have sent down the Reminder (the Quran), and indeed we will be its guardian". (Al-Quran 15: 9).

This implies that as Allah has taken the responsibility to preserve the Quran therefore Islam shall remain a source of guidance for people of all times till the end of the world.

3) It is not confined to a specific geography
Allah says in Surah Al-Baqarah:
"The month of Ramadan (is that) in
which the Quran was revealed as guidance
for the people" (Al-Quran 2:185).

This verse indicates that Quran was
revealed as a guidance for all the people.
By emphasizing 'the people' it implies that
the teaching of The Quran are meant
to transcend geographical boundaries.

4) It is not for a specific ethnicity:
Allah SWT mention in the Quran:

"Say, (O Muhammad), O mankind, indeed
I am the Messenger of Allah to you
all, (from Him) to whom belongs the
dominion of the heavens and the Earth".
(Al-Quran 7:158).

In this verse Prophet Muhammad^ﷺ is
commanded to address all of the
mankind, emphasizing that his^ﷺ message
is for the benefit of all the people
regardless of their ethnicity or cultural
background.

This highlights the universality of
Islam as a religion and its teachings.

SALIENT FEATURES OF ISLAM

1 - ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF TAWHEED

Fundamental to the religious structure of Islam is the concept of Tawheed or monotheism.

Tawheed is the indivisible concept of oneness of God as the Creator, Protector and the Sustainer.

It is mentioned in Quran in Surah Al-Ikhlâs:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ①
اللَّهُ الْقَدِيمُ ②
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ③
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ④

- "Say (O messengers) He, Allah is the only one. Allah is the eternal refuge. He neither begets nor is born. Nor is there to Him any equivalent.

Believing in The unique oneness of Allah in His nature, names and attributes. This belief is the core pillar of Islam and hence solidifies the submission of one's desire to The only Eternal Lord.

Believing in the oneness of Allah involves having a staunch faith in the angels, the prophets, the holy books, the day of Judgement, the life in hereafter and the Divine Decree of good and evil.

In addition to these core beliefs Islam and the concept of Tawheed consists of basic rituals as explained by the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad PBUH:

"Islam is built on five (pillars); belief that Allah is One, establishing regular prayer, paying zakaah, fasting Ramadan and performing the Hajj".
(Shahih Muslim).

Allama Shibli Naumani in his book "Seerah tu al Nabi" mentions

Tawheed

"~~Tawheed~~ is like the first chapter of Islamic syllabus".

A hadith of the Prophet PBUH explains Tawheed as follows.

"Islam is a like a fort and the gate to that fort is Tawheed". (Muslim).

2) PROPHETHOOD

Faith in the Oneness of Allah goes hand in hand with the Finality of Prophethood of Muhammad PBUH. The second part of the Kalima Shahada invokes this belief.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ ۝

"There is no God except Allah,
Muhammad (PBUH) is His Messenger
(Prophet) of Allah".

Thus the second basic postulate of Islam
is to believe in the prophethood of
Muhammad (SAW), to accept the
religion he presents and follow his
commands in ^{all} the aspects of life.

Allah mentions in the Holy Quran:

"Muhammad is not the father of any
of your men, but is the Messenger
of Allah and the seal of Prophets.
And Allah has the perfect knowledge
of all things".

Faith in the Prophethood of Muhammad
also involves believing that He (P) is
the last of the Messengers and his
teachings of Islam are complete and
according to the Quran (The book of Allah).
As mentioned in Surah - Al-Shuara
in The Quran:

إِنِّي لَكُم رَّسُولٌ آمِينٌ ﴿١٥٧﴾

"I am truly a trustworthy Messenger
to you".

(Al-Quran 26:107).

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent to us as:

- 1) ideal way of life
- 2) an educator.

It has been mentioned in a Hadith (P):

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

Prophet Muhammad was given the Quran, to preach the mankind towards the path of eternal salvation. All of his (SAW) teaching come directly in contrast with teachings of Allah as mentioned in the Quran.

"Your fellow man is neither misguided nor astray. Nor does he speak of his own whims".

(Al-Quran 53:3-4).

Therefore it can be concluded that to have faith in Islam means to have an undoubted belief that the only true ideal way of living is the life lead by Prophet Muhammad PBUH. If Quran is the theory then Prophet Muhammad (P) is the practice of that theory.

In the words of Ujesta B.A, the wife of Prophet Muhammad, when asked about the character of Prophet PBUH, she replied:

"Verily the character of the Prophet of Allah was the Quran" (Sahih Muslim).

3) COMPLETE CODE OF LIFE:

Islam as prescribed in the Quran and Hadith is a complete code of life. It provides guidance in every aspect of living whether it be individual or the social life of man.

From the birth of an individual when an adhān is said in the ear of the newborn to the guidance in the moral development of a child Islam has given instructions for our betterment.

Islam provides counsel regarding the character building of a child as well as his/her education.

In hadith we have been informed:

"Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim man and woman".

طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ

Islam has provided us guidance in earning livelihood through pure and halal means. It has also made earning a form of worship. Thus, making the debar and dunya go hand in hand with each other. Allah mentions in the Quran in Surah Zukhruf, ayah number 32:

"We (alone) have distributed their livelihood among them in this worldly life

The guidance of Islam extends beyond the individual life. It helps us with our rights and duties of parents, children, spouses as well as neighbours and relatives.

Prophet (ﷺ) on the occasion of the Farewell Hajj said,

"Your lives and properties are forbidden to one another till you meet your Lord on the Day of Resurrection".....

Islam specifically emphasises in the Islamic way of politics and justice system. Quran guides us in the following words -

"Co-operate with one another for virtue and heedfulness and do not cooperate with one another in vice and aggression
(Al-Quran 5: 2)

Islam gives us clear instructions with regards to Financial system as well as International and Global affairs.

4) ISLAM AND HUMANITY

Islam has emphasized on the complete alignment of religion and humanity. In Islamic moral system, there is a severe opposition to factors that inhibit people from connecting with one another, such as fear, cruelty and vanity.

Rather Islam guides us to enjoin in the feelings of love, care, tolerance, compassion, empathy, kindness and equality towards each other.

Prophet Muhammad PBUH has said:

"The perfect among the believers are those who are the best in their characters".

Allah has mentioned in the Quran:

"O mankind! we created you from a single (pair) of man and a woman and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well-Acquainted". (Al Quran 113)

Islam has always emphasized on the welfare of mankind to ensure peace and harmony among people.

Dr. Wasi Ullah Muhammad Abbas (Jamiah ul Azhar, Egypt) in his book "Key Feature of Islam" mentions that:

"The greatest feature of Islam is the practice of social service".

In Islam, humanity isn't just limited to the duties owed to an individual, but it

also emphasizes on taking care of the emotional needs of people around us. Especially focusing on travellers, sick people, elderly, orphans and widows. Allah mentions in a Hadith al Qudsi:

"Allah shows displeasure for a person never visits a sick person".

5) FULFILMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The real purpose of Islam in embracing the total life of a man is to make the religious faith a practical and role in reforming human life and in developing in man an attitude of dutifully performing his rights to those around him.

The first and the foremost basic right is the right to live and respect human life. The Holy Quran lays down:

"Whosoever kills a human being without (any reason like) man slaughter, or corruption on the earth, it is as though he killed all mankind....."

(Al-Quran 5:32).

Islam has particularly emphasized the rights and status of women in an Islamic society. At the occasion of his (SAW) Farewell Sermon, Prophet Muhammad addressed the

people and said:

"Fear Allah regarding women. Verily you have married them with the trust of Allah and made their bodies lawful by with the (trust) word of Allah. You have got (rights) over them, and they have got (rights) over you in respect of their food and clothing according to your means".

Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in his (SAW) last sermon at the occasion of Hajj informed the people that he (P) had conveyed the Deen of Allah to them and performed his duty as a Messenger.

He abolished racism and all forms of ethical and cultural discrimination. Holy Prophet PBUH said:

"All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab has any superiority over any Arab, also a white has no superiority over a black nor a Black has any superiority over a white except by piety and good actions".

Islam gave clear rights of every individual in every role to lead a content life that can lead to a successful hereafter.

6) ANIMAL RIGHTS:

Islam provides considerable support for the importance of animal welfare. There is a rich tradition of the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) concern for animals to be found in ~~Qur~~ Hadith and Sunnah.

Allah mentions in the Quran as:

"We have made animals subject to you, that you may be grateful".

(Al Quran 22:36).

One hadith quotes Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) saying:

"The worst of the shepherds is the ungentle, who causes the beasts to crush or bruise one another". (Muslim).

The record of hadith tells us that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) informed the Sahabas that "a woman was sentenced to Hell", on being asked about the reason he (pbuh) replied: "a cat died of thirst because of her".

7) ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Islam emphasized on protection of the environment, sustainability and cruelty free consumption of natural resources.

Allah mentions the Quran in following words:

"And eat and drink, but do not be excessive indeed, Allah likes not those who commit excess".

(Al-Quran 7:31).

Similarly, The Hadith and Sunnah also gives us an account of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) being conscious towards deforestation, wasting food and water.

Once He (PBUH) passed by a companion and said:

"Do not waste water while performing wudhu even if you are at a flowing river". (Ibn-e-Majah).

Islam strictly prohibits cutting of trees. A hadith of Prophet ﷺ states:

"Do not cut green trees even if you are at a war".

Therefore, to understand the essence of Islam is to understand the very essence of humanity. More than a religion Islam is a complete and comprehensive way of life leading to a balanced way of living.

As Sayyid Qutb wrote:

"A spiritual belief that does not deal with social, behavioral, economic relations and international organizations is as erroneous as the social doctrine that does not consider spiritual belief, morality and behaviour."
..... history has shown that Islam is unique in its ability to provide guidance for the entire range of human activity. It does not separate spiritual and secular life as unrelated entities".