

Q) What is Islam? salient features of Islam?

1. Meaning of Islam: Islam is an Arabic word mentioned in the Holy Quran which denotes surrender or submission. The erstwhile name of Islam was Deen-e-Hanif which means monotheist. In general the meaning of Islam is to submit one's own desires to the will of Almighty Allah. The literal meaning of the word Islam refers to peace, which implies peace of mind and body that one attains through submission to Allah. In this regard the Holy Quran states:

"Those who believe and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah - indeed it is in the remembrance of Allah alone that the heart of man finds rest" [3: 28-29]

2. Salient features of Islam: Islam has a wide range of beliefs and practices that distinguish it from other religions.

3. Tawheed: According to Islam the message of Oneness of Allah was preached throughout history by many prophets, however along the way this message was distorted and tampered with. Thus, arising a need for a new prophet to come and disseminate the true word of Allah. The final prophet, Muhammad^{pbuh} was the last prophet

sent by the creator of worlds, Allah, to remind mankind about the true message. Tawheed refers to the oneness of Allah. It's the belief that Allah alone is the creator and sustainer of worlds, He has no partners and should be worshipped alone. In this regard the Quray say:

"Say He is Allah the One, Allah is eternal and absolute, He did not give birth and He was not born, And there is none like Him" [Surah Al-Ikhlās]

Tawheed is the fundamental belief in Islam and is essential for any individual to enter the folds of Islam.

4. Finality of Prophet hood: Along with Tawheed, believing in Muhammad ^(Pbuh) as the last and final prophet of Allah, is another essential belief in Islam. These two beliefs are also rehearsed in shahada which translates to

"I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad ^{Pbuh} is the messenger of Allah"

Muhammad ^(Pbuh) is the seal of prophets, through whom the Almighty Allah revealed the Holy Quran. Declaring the finality of prophet hood, the Quran says:

"Muhammad is not the father of any

your men, but he is the messenger
of Allah and the seal of prophets"
[33:40]

5. No compulsion in religion: In Islam, one can only enter from their own free will. This implies that no one should be forced to accept Islam. The rationale behind this is that belief and faith in Almighty Allah and prophet Muhammad ^{Pbuh} should come from the heart rather than being enforced by someone. Regarding this the Quran says:

"There is no compulsion in religion" (2:256)

6. Universal deen: Islam is an universal deen that is created for people of all times. This religion is not limited to certain ethnicities and does not know any geographical limitations either. One does not have to be born in a Muslim household in order to accept Islam unlike other religions such as Judaism, where according to Halakha, one must be born to a Jewish mother in order to become a Jew. The Quran says:

"We have sent you forth as nothing but mercy to people of the whole world" [21:107]

This verse is a testament that Islam is a religion sent for all of mankind

7. Complete code of life: Islam is more than a religion, it is a complete code of life. This means that Islam not only instructs one on how to worship Allah, but rather guides them & on how to live & their daily lives, and informs them regarding their responsibilities pertaining to their own individual lives as well the community. It guides one in all the tasks of life, whether as small as sleeping or as complex as running a state.

8. Equality: Islam enjoys the concept of equality. Islam has clarified that Allah does not love an individual on the basis of wealth and fame, but rather the Almighty loves one on their actions and their righteousness. No ethnicities, skin-colour, or nationalities are preferred over another. This was also repeated by the Prophet ^{Pbuh} in his last sermon, wherein he stated:

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

This statement reinforces the notion that all mankind are equal in front of Allah, if someone is to gain superiority it is solely on the basis of piety and good action.

9. Prayer: The five obligatory prayer (salat) is another salient feature of Islam. These five prayers are a source of humility and submissiveness towards Allah for mankind. The importance of salat can be discerned from the fact that the very first question asked on the day of judgment will pertain to this religious obligation. The Holy Quran emphasises the significance of five daily prayers in many verses, with one notable example being:

"Take due care of all the prayers, and the middle prayer, and stand before Allah in total devotion." [2:238]

10. Conclusion: The features mentioned are some of the most essential beliefs and practices in Islam. These are a few of the many features that Islam has introduced and these are what distinguishes Islam from other faiths.