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Islamic Studies

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Batch 331.

Assignment: 1

Question: 1.

What is Islam? Enlist the salient features of Islam.

Answer:-

Introduction

Islam means submission to only Allah. It is the religion which brings peace to mankind when a man submits himself to Allah's will. A Muslim is the one who submits to the divine injunctions and does not deviate from them.

Muslims believe in the absolute unity of Allah (Tawheed), and also in Messengers, Angels, the Holy Books, The day of Judgement and the predestination of Good and Evil.

These are five pillars of Islam - Shahadah, Salah, Fast, Hajj and Zakat. It is the religion of truth. It is a complete code of life that is revealed for the guidance in all the aspects of life. It is the only religion professed by all the prophets from Hazrat Adam (A.S.) to Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.).

Literal meaning of Islam:-

Islam is derived from Arabic word SLM, pronounced as 'salm' meaning peace from which comes the word 'aslama' which means he submitted or surrendered himself.

Contextual meaning

Contextually, Islam means entering into peace by submitting to the will of Allah. It means that peace is attained by thorough submission and

obedience to Allah

Islam and Shariah:-

In Shariah, Islam means voluntarily submitting to the will of Allah.

There is no compulsion in the choice of Islam as a religion. Anyone can voluntarily accept Islam and become a Muslim. Allah mentions in Quran,

"Let there be no compulsion in religion, for the truth stands out clear from falsehood. So, whoever renounces false gods and believes in Allah, has certainly grasped the firmest, un-failing hand-hold." (2:256).

In Surah Al-Kafiroon, Allah mentions

"To you be your religion, and to me my religion." (109:06).

Thus, none can be forced to accept Islam. Rather everyone is free to embrace Islam voluntarily and willingly.

Scholarly definitions of Islam:-

According to Hadith of Gabriel, Islam means to ^{bear} ~~have~~ witness of Allah and His Messengers and to establish pillars of Islam (Kalma, Salah, Fast, Hajj and Zakat).

Dr. Hameedullah defines Islam as monotheist deen revealed through Prophet (P.B.U.H).

In Imam Ghazali's view, Islam is a combination of two things; Rights of Allah and Rights of people.

Sadar-ud-din Islahi defined Islam as a combination of faiths and rituals.

As Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) said,

"Indeed actions are the results of their intentions." (Al-Hadith).

Every act according to Quran and Sunnah is considered

as Ibaadah in Islam.

According to Oxford Dictionary,
Islam is combination of,

- i) To accept monotheism.
- ii) To embrace Prophethood
- iii) and to practice Muslim culture.

Salient features of Islam:

Islam is a true religion with numerous salient features.

i) Islamic concept of Tawheed

Tawheed means witnessing that there is only One Supreme Lord of the Universe. He is the Omnipotent and the Sustainer of the entire universe. It is the core pillar of Islam. All other Islamic faiths (Prophethood, believe in Holy Books, Angels, Akhira etc.) are dependent on Tawheed. It is the first part of Kalma so, in order to be a Muslim witnessing Oneness of Allah is obligatory.

Mama Shibli Nomani in his book, *Seerat un Nabi (SAW)* mentions two Ahadith. Firstly, Tawheed is the first chapter of Islamic syllabus and secondly, Islam is like a fort and the gate of that fort is Tawheed. No other religion except Islam provides the concept of Tawheed.

Allah mentions this concept in Quran. Surah Al-Ikhlās clearly declares the Oneness of Almighty Allah. It is also known as Surah Tawheed.

“Say, He is God, the One.” (112:1)

At another place Allah mentions,

“O, Mankind: worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, so that you may ward off evil.” (2:21).

Thus, the starting point of Islam is the belief in the unity of God (Tawheed).

ii) Prophethood :-

After Tawheed, the second basic postulate of Islam is to believe in the Prophethood of Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H). It involves believing that Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is the last prophet of Allah and accepting the religion which He presented and to follow His commands. It is the second part of Kalma. Allah mentions in Surah Al-Adhab,

“Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is the seal of Prophethood.” (33: 40).

Furthermore, Allah says that Muhammad (P.B.U.H) has been sent as the best example of how to live life (Al-Burrah). To believe in Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) means to accept his authority as representative of the Supreme Ruler and to follow his example in thoughts and behaviours.

The world according to Islam is a place of trial and man is being judged in it. Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) is the best role model for mankind to be successful in this world and hereafter as well. The Sunnah of Prophet (P.B.U.H) teaches us how to spend life according to the injunctions of Allah. It teaches how to practice the teachings mentioned in the Quran in real life. According to Hazrat Ayesha (R.A), Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) is the living example/embodiment of Quran.

iii) Concept of life after death :-

Belief in the day of Judgement is another important feature of Islam. Muslims firmly believe in the concept of Akhirah. As they know that they are accountable for their deeds, so they try to do good deeds and keep themselves away from sins. They believe that life on earth will come to an end one day and after that

a new world will be resurrected. In that world, everyone will be rewarded or punished for his/her deeds. This ~~believe~~ belief generates the sense of accountability in an individual. This is how this feature of Islam separates it from rest of the religions. Allah says in Quran,

“Fear the day when no one will avail another.” (Al-Baqarah)

iv) A Revealed Religion:-

Islam is the only revealed religion. It is revealed through Prophets. Allah has revealed His Guidance through His Prophets and Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is the last messenger of Allah. All the Prophets from Hazrat Adam (A.S) to Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H) preached only religion Islam. Thus, Islam is a revealed religion and is not man made. While, religions like Hinduism, Buddhism ~~etc~~ are man made. It is the true religion in which there is no doubt.

“This is the Book, whereof there is no doubt.” (Al-Baqarah).

v) Islam, A Universal Deen:-

Islam is a universal deen that provides guidance in all the spheres of life. Moreover, it is not bounded by time. It is for whole humanity. People of all ages can get guidance from it. It is not confined to a specific geographical territory. It is not confined to a specific ethnic group. Rather, people belonging to any ethnicity, irrespective of their race, colour and caste can become the part of Islam.

Practical example of Islam can be seen at the time of Hajj, when people from all over the world are performing Hajj irrespective of their class, nation, culture etc.

vi) Islam is for whole humanity

Islam is an ideal system of living

for all mankind. Mankind is the subject matter of Quran. Numerous verses of Quran begin with "O, mankind". Islam teaches humanity in every sphere of life. It teaches about sympathy, kindness, charity, human rights, animal rights. It not only guides individually but also provides guidance in collective spheres of life. It teaches how to deal with different issues like financial, political, administrative etc.

"O people! I am the Messenger of God to you all" (Al-Habib)

vii) Islam is a complete code of life.

Islam not only provides us guidance in personal/individual aspects of life but also in collective spheres of life. It provides guidance from birth till death. It deals with collective as well as with individual aspects of life. Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) is the best example to follow. He (P.B.U.H) provides guidance about social, political, economic, judicial and global affairs of life. Islam tells about God-man relationship as well as man-man relationship. It is a complete code of life that caters for all the fields of man's existence. It provides guidance for all walks of life - individual, social, material, moral, legal, cultural, intercultural etc.

Allah mentions in the Quran,

"And we have explained to man, in this Quran, every kind of similitude." (17:89)

viii) Human Rights :-

Human rights are clearly mentioned in Islam. Islam gives the right to life, live in dignity, justice, equal protection of law, right to education, freedom of expression, right to basic necessities of life, right to property and many more. Previously, women were humiliated but Islam gives women rights and their obligation is compulsory. Before Islam, women did not get right to property, but

In Islam there are proper shares of women in inheritance. Islam gives them respect. The farewell sermon of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) explained clearly human rights and duties. It includes rights of women, slaves, neighbours, relatives etc. In Islam, all are equal in the eyes of Allah. There is no discrimination among whites, blacks, rich, poor, slaves, masters, male, female etc.

"There is no favour of an Arab over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab, and neither white skin over black skin, nor black skin over white skin, except by righteousness." (Al-Hadith)

Islam provides the right to the safety of life. It is mentioned in Quran,

"And whoever saves a life it is as though he had saved the lives of all mankind." (5:32)

Thus, Islam is a peaceful religion that guides about human rights. It not only teaches human rights but also emphasizes to perform their duties.

ix) Animal Rights

Islam not only guides about human rights but also discusses animal rights. Masters should not be cruel to their animals. Islam has clear instructions about their rights:

"An act of cruelty to an animal is as bad as an act of cruelty to a human being." (Al-Hadith).

Furthermore, Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) said,

"May God curse anyone who maims animals." (Hadith: Sukhari).

At another point Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) mentioned,

"Whoever is kind to the creatures of God is kind to himself." (Al-Hadith)

Thus, how animal rights are emphasized in Islam. It is the

salient feature of Islam that besides considering human rights, it also takes into account animal rights:

2) Islam is simple and rational.

Islamic teachings are simple and intelligible. Islam is free from superstitions and irrational beliefs. All the injunctions of Almighty Allah are clearly mentioned in Quran. There is no hierarchy of priests and no complicated rites and rituals. Everyone can approach Islam directly. Islam awakens in man the faculty of reason. It allows him to see things in the light of reality. In Quran, Allah has clearly mentioned,

"those who believe and act righteously, for them is for them, and a blissful home to return to" (18:29).

Holy Prophet (PBUH) says,

"God doesn't accept belief, if it is not expressed in deeds, and doesn't accept deeds if they do not conform to belief." (Al-Hadith)

Thus, the teachings of Islam are simple and easily understandable.

Conclusion

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In conclusion, Islam is a peaceful religion that conveys its teachings in quite simple and understandable manner.

Quran and Sunnah are the prime sources of Islamic Shari'ah. Everyone can become Muslim voluntarily and enter into the boundaries of Islam. It involves complete submission to only

One God, ^{as} the Creator and the Sustainer of the entire universe.

Doing every act according to Islamic teachings is considered as Ibadat in Islam. It is the only revealed religion sent by Allah

through all prophets. The salient features of Islam separate it from rest of the religions. Islam is a universal deen and a complete code of life.