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## • Enlist the Salient features of Islam.

### • Meaning and Concept of Islam

The literal meaning of the word "Islam" which is derived from the Arabic word "Silm" is peace and submission. It means "peace" which can only be acquired through submission and obedience towards the creator Allah. It is the obedience and submission not only in belief or prayer but in ethics, morality, politics, culture, social behavior, laws, economics, national and international affairs. It means to submit oneself to the creator will of the creator in an individual and collective manner.

### • Basics of Islamic Belief system

#### ① Tawhid (Oneness of Allah)

- The first and starting point of Islam is the belief in one God that is Allah. This revolutionary concept signifies monotheism; oneness of Allah. There is only one supreme Lord of the universe and that is Allah so one must worship Allah alone without associating any partners.
- The first part of the Kalimah "La ilaha illallah" signifies the oneness of Allah, "there is no God but Allah".
- # This oneness and supreme authority is also signified in Surah Al-Ikhlâs (112),  
"Say, He is Allah (who is one), Allah the eternal refuge,  
He neither begets nor is born, Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

## ② Prophethood

The second part of the Kalimah signifies that God has not left man without any guidance for the conduct of his life. He has revealed His guidance through His prophets, starting Hazrat Adam (AS) and ending at Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH). To believe in a prophet means to believe and accept the revelations he has received by Allah, and to follow the code of conduct that he was instructed to pass on to humanity. All the prophets are human beings but their lives are role models for mankind.

- Surah An Nisa (4:64) states,

"We have not sent any messenger, but that he was to be obeyed with God's permission".

## ③ Life after death

Belief in life after death is also a basic of the Islamic belief system. The world according to Islam is a place of trial and man is being judged in it. One day, he will have to give account of what he did during his lifetime and he will be rewarded or punished accordingly. This is signified in Surah Al Israa (17:13-14),

"And we have made every man's actions to cling to his neck, and we will bring forth to him on the resurrection day a book which he will find wide open: Read your book; your own self is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day"

● Salient features of Islam

① Ideology of Islam

Islam is a divinely revealed ideology which was revealed on Prophet (PBUH) who was the last messenger of Allah. All other religions claim to be revealed but their teachings have changed now

“Certainly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His communication and purifying them, and teaching them the book and the wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error.” (Surah Al-Iman 3:164)

② Islam is a practical, rational and simple religion

Islam is a religion without any mythology or irrational beliefs. Its simple teachings are based on reason and logic. Islam awakens the faculty of reason in man and exhorts him to use his intellect.

“That those who do not observe and understand worse than cattle” (Surah Al-Aaraaf 7:179). Islam brings man out of the world of superstition and darkness. “To seek knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim.” (Ibn Majah, Bayhaqi). Islam is something to be practiced not a mere lip-service. The Qur'an says, “Those who believe and act righteously, joy is for them, and a blissful home to return to”.

(Surah Ar-Raad 13:29)

③ Unity of matter and spirit

A unique feature of Islam is that it doesnot divide life into compartments of matter and spirit. It stands not for the denial of life but for the fulfillment of life. It doesnot ask man to avoid material things.

It holds that spiritual elevation is to be achieved by living piously in the rough and tumble of life, not by renouncing the world. The Qur'an advises us to pray as follows,

“Our Lord! Give us something fine in this world as well as something fine in the hereafter and protect us from the hellfire.” (Surah Baqarah 2:201)

Islam seeks to establish an equilibrium between the two aspects of life - the material and spiritual. It says that everything in the world is for man and man was created to serve a higher purpose.

“O Children of Adam! Attend to your embellishments at every time of prayer, and eat and drink and be not extravagant; surely He doesnot love the extravagant.” (Surah Al-Aaraaf 7:31)

④ A complete way of life

Islam is a complete way of life for it doesnot confine its scope to one's private life. It provides guidance for all aspects of life individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, national and international, etc.

## ⑤ Balance between Individual and Society

Islam establishes a balance between individualism and collectivism. It guarantees the fundamental rights of the individual and does not permit anyone to tamper with them. The Qur'an says,

"Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability; for it is (the benefit of) what it has earned and upon it (the evil of) what it has wrought." (Surah Baqarah 2:286)

On the other hand, it also awakens a sense of social responsibility in man, organizes human beings in the society and enjoins the individual to subscribe to social good. For example, prayer, in Islam, is offered in congregation. Furthermore, everyone is enjoined to pay zakaat and when the occasion arises offer his life for the defense of Islam in jihad. The believer of Islam is not a danger to the life and property of any other. "He is not a believer who takes his fill while his neighbour starves."

## ⑥ Universality and Humanism

The Qur'an says,

"We have sent you (O Muhammad (PBUH)) only as a mercy for everybody in the universe." (Surah Al-Anbiya 21:107). Islam is a message of peace for humanity.

It banishes the false barriers of race, status and wealth. In Islam, all men are equal regardless of

color, language, race or nationality. This is evident in the last sermon of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which states "An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab 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"

7 Complete record of teachings preserved.

Another important feature of Islam is that its teachings have been preserved in their original form.

Allah's guidance is available to all without any adulteration of any kind. The Qur'an is a revealed book and the word of Allah which is present in its original form. It cannot be changed or altered because Allah Himself has taken the responsibility to preserve this sacred book. The Qur'an says,

"It is certainly We Who have revealed the Reminder, and it is certainly We Who will preserve it"

(Surah Hijr 15:9)

Islam maintains that the message of Allah was completed and perfected through Islam. The Qur'an says, "This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion"

(Surah Maidah 5:3)