

Islamiat

Assignment #1

What is Islam, enlist the salient features of Islam.

Outline / Synopsis.

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3. Elucidation and exposition of Islam.

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• Introduction:

Islam is the religion of truth that Allah Almighty, the Creator of Universe, has revealed for the betterment of mankind to get stability and to reach at the pinnacle of glory through it.

Allah Almighty says in Quran:

“ان الدين عند الله الاسلام”

Surely, the true religion with Allah is Islam”
(Al-Imran)

Islam teaches the absolute unity of God, and it emphasizes the belief in the messengers, revealed books, the Angels, the Last day and predestination of Good and Evil. The Islamic devotional system comprising of prayer, Almsgiving, fasting, pilgrimage etc promotes an outstanding social culture that works for human welfare. In order to fulfill the both material and spiritual needs of mankind, Allah Almighty revealed, “Islam” — The way of life, with distinctive features.

Allah Almighty mentions in Al-Quran:

“اليوم اكملت لكم دينكم واتممت عليكم نعمتي ورضيت لكم الاسلام ديناً”

“Today, I have perfected for you, your religion, Completed upon you, my favour, And Chosen for you Islam as Deen” (Al-Maidah 3)

2. Definition and Meaning of Islam

“A monotheistic faith and the Code of life (Deen), that Allah Almighty has revealed for humanity so that they may attain peace and stability in individual life and harmony in the society, which is bequeathed by Holy Prophet (PBUH).”

Sadaruddin Islohi defines Islam as:

"Islam, a Combination of two things, Beliefs and Worships."

Literal meaning:

The word "Islam" has been derived from the root of Arabic word "س-ل-م" (سليم), which means "to Surrender", "to yield" and "to Submit one's self." It means Submission of desires to the will of Allah is called Islam. Another meaning of the word "Islam" is "Peace."

Hence on the vertical level (God-to-man relationship) Islam means Submission and on the horizontal level (man-to-man relationship) it means peace. Hence Islam actually means To enter in peace by Submitting to the will of Allah Almighty.

3. Elucidation/Exposition of Islam

The religious Islam is based on following sections:

- (i) Beliefs (الاعتقادات)
- (ii) Devotions (عبادات)
- (iii) Transactions (معاملات)

(i) Beliefs (الاعتقادات)

The followers of Islam are known as Muslims. Muslims believe in Oneness of Allah Almighty, in the messengers, in the revealed books, the Angels and the day of Judgment. All these beliefs are the building blocks of Islam and distinguish Islam from other religions.

(ii) Worships (عبادات)

Islam has prescribed five services of worship daily in order to provide proof of one's submission.

and gratitude to Allah Almighty, our Creator. That applies to every adult man or woman to abandon worldly affairs and spend few minutes in service of Allah Almighty. The Quran calls out for worship hundred times by calling it as Salat (inclination), dua (prayer), dhikr (remembering), tasbeeh (glorification).

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says:-

“Worship is the pillar of the religion”

Devotions are divided into five articles of practice:

- Recital of Creed (Kalimah)
- Prayer to God (Salat)
- Paying legal alms (Zakat)
- Fasting in the month of Ramadan (Siyam)
- Pilgrimage (Hajj)

(iii) Transactions (معاملات)

Transactions require such duties which are required between man and man are further divided into following categories:

• Devotional sphere

The prayer, Animal sacrifice and Takbirs during the day of Tashreeq, Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Azha, Jonoza prayer and burying of dead etc.

• Social sphere

Marriage and divorce and other relevant details etc.

• Dietary sphere

Prohibition of pork, blood, meat of dead animals and animals slaughtered in the name of someone other than Allah etc.

• Security sphere

Civil jurisprudence, shariat laws of property distribution etc.

4. Salient features of Islam

These are the some distinctive features of Islam which make it so appealing to the contemporary world and for millions of followers.

(i) Islamic Concept of Tauheed

The belief in Oneness of Allah is epitomized in the first part of "Kalimah", which needs to be testified to enter the fold of Islam.

“لا اله الا الله”

“There is none worthy of worship except God (Allah)”. Muslims have nothing in common with atheists, polytheists and those who associate others with the one God because they believe that all mankind is created by Allah Almighty and He is the Supreme Power in the Universe.

Allah Almighty says in Quran:

قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفوا احد

“Say, He is Allah, the only One, Allah, the one taking care of everything. He did not give birth and He was not born. And He never had any equal at all!”

(Al-Ikhlās : 1-4)

Tauheed is the core pillar of Islam and all other faiths and worships, rituals and systems of Islam are based on Tauheed.

(ii) Prophethood

Muslims believe in this fact that for proper development of Human life, Allah Almighty had raised some prophets among men and revealed to them the true code of life. The Second Part of the Creed testifies this fact.

“محمد رسول الله”

“Muhammad (PBUH) is the messenger of Allah”

Muslims believe in the finality of Holy Prophet (PBUH) and along with Holy Prophet, they believe in other prophets such as Hazrat Ibrahim (A.S), Hazrat Musa (A.S), Jesus, Noah, Sahaib etc.

Quran says:

ما كان محمد اباً احدا من رجالكم ولكن رسول الله وخاتم النبيين -

“Muhammad is not the father of one of you men, but the messenger of Allah and Last of the prophets.”

(سورة احزاب)

The holy prophet (PBUH) provided rules, knowledge and guidance through his practical life for all Mankind.

(iii) Universality

Islam is a universal religion because it does not recognize any cast, creed or borders. The message of Islam is for whole mankind as the first Ayat of Quran refers:

الحمد لله رب العالمين

(Al-Fatiha)

Here Allah Almighty introduced Himself as the God of all mankind and similarly Quran refers to the Holy Prophet as:

“رحمة للعالمين” (التنوير)

“Mercy for All mankind”

Islam wants to unite the entire human race under one banner by divine message of hope and justice.

(iv) Complete Code of life

Islam is the complete code of life as it is a Deen which provides guidance in every domain of life. Allah says

in Quran

“ولقد صرنا للناس في هذا القرآن من كل مثل”

“Undoubtedly, we have explained for people in this Quran very kind of similitude” (Al-quran)

Islam provides guidance in individual life, birth and upbringing of children, character building, Education, Collective life, financial and social systems etc.

v) Revealed Ideology and Authenticity

Islam is not a man-made religion but a divinely revealed ideology on Holy Prophet and it inculcates self-discipline, self-sacrifice and self-accountability. It is the fact that teachings of Islam have been preserved in their original form. Unlike other religions such as Christianity, Judaism etc, the divine message of Islam is available in its pristine purity without even a single change in the form of Quran for last 1450 years.

“انا نحن نزلنا الذكر وانا له لحفظون”

“verily, we have revealed this Quran and verily we will protect it.” (القرآن)

(vi) Practicality and Moderation

One of the most striking feature of Islam is that it is not only the religion of knowledge but it is also a religion of practice. As Holy Quran says:

فان ليس للانسان الا ما سعى

“And there is not for man except that for which he strives” (النجم)

Islam also promotes moderation as it is not an extremist religion like other religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism which promote self-denial in the form of Saddhus and monks. But Islam promotes a balance between mundane and sacred life through its devotional sphere.

vii) The Path of Peace (سبيل السلام)

The Quran refers to Islam as

“سبيل السلام”
“The path of peace”
(الطائفة)

It is the path through which we can attain peace in our individual as well as in our society. Islam promotes peace and guides man how to be peaceful to attain zenith of humanity.

viii) Teaching and Promotion of Good morals

Teaching of good morals is also an important and prominent feature of Islam as Holy Prophet (PBUH) once said:-

بعثت لا اتمم مقامه الا خلاق ومخامس الا اعمال.
“God has sent me to perfect good manners and to do good deed”

Islam professes that good morals are born out of patience, charity, valour and justice and bad morals are born out of envy, jealousy and rebellion arouse in man. Hence Islam promotes forbearance, avoiding fury, aggression and patience to build a strong character of man. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) life is an exemplary role model for us to be followed. The Holy Prophet said:

“The perfect among the believers are those who are best in character”

(ix) Unprejudiced religion based on Equality.

Islam is an unprejudiced religion because it awards everyone what they deserve, it not only protect one's own religion but it does not deprives others from their right of protection and it considers all men equal in the sight of Allah Almighty. The Holy Quran and Our Prophet (PBUH) always espoused prejudiced and its all forms and promotes equality.

According to Quran superiority of one man over another is only on the basis of God-consciousness, purity of character and high morals.

(x) True Spirituality

It is a proven fact that human body is a combination of body and soul. Material needs are limited and can be fulfilled through various resources, however spiritual needs can be fulfilled/attained only by following the pristine teachings of Islam and abstaining from immoral acts. Islam is the spiritual nourishment of those who want to lead a divine life and to attain peace.

Allah says in Quran:

الاذكر الله تطمئن القلوب

"Indeed, in the remembrance of Allah, lies the peace of heart" (Al-quran)

(xi) Reverance of Knowledge and Rationality

Islam truly patronize the knowledge as it is aware of the superiority of knowledge. It is the Holy Quran whose initial words revealed on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are:

اقرا باسم ربك الذي خلقه خلق الانسان من علقه امر اوردبك الا لرحمة الذي علم بالقلم علم الانسان ما لم يعلم

"Recite in the name of your Lord who created. Created man from a clinging substance. Recite and your Lord is the most Generous who taught by the pen - taught man that he knew not" (Al-Alaq)

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

"He who leaves his home in search of knowledge walks in the path of God" (Tirmidhi)

Islam awakens a man the faculty of reason and exhorts him to use his intellect. It exhorts him to see things in the light of reality to come out of the world of superstitions and darkness. The reverence of knowledge and rationality is given in the Quran as:

قل هل يستوي الذين يعلمون والذين لا يعلمون

"Say: Are those who know and those who do not know alike?"

(Az-Zumar)

(xii) Islam Promotes Humanity

Islam promotes humanity because it believes that there is no greater religion than humanity. Islamic devotions and transactions are the embodiments of humanity. Islam promotes character building, provision of medical aid, charity and many acts for the welfare of mankind. Financial system of Islam promotes equal distribution of wealth to remove social barriers and sufferings of people.

Scholar of Al-Azhar university Dr. Wasiullah Abbas in his book says: "Key features of Islam" says:

"Practice of Social Services is the biggest characteristic of Islam"

(Xiii) Protection of Human Rights

Protection and promotion of provision of human rights is another striking feature of Islam. Islam defines the every domain of human rights including rights of servants, women, slaves, prisoners etc. According to **Imam Ghazali**:

"Islam is a combination of two things, Rights of Allah (حقوق الله) and Rights of People (حقوق العباد)."

(Xiv) Protection of Animals and Environment

Islam is a complete code of life hence it not only emphasises the importance of Human rights but also it provides protection of animals and environment. Islam is the only religion which is flag bearer of humanity. The Holy prophet (PBUH) laid the foundation of a society that treated animals with kindness. Prophet (PBUH) reprimanded a person because his camel was thirsty. The importance of environment protection is clear by following Ahadith:

"Planting a tree is a charity." (الحديث)

"Do not cut trees even if you are in case of war." (الحديث)

(Xv) Islam's Foundations are beyond Nationalism.

Islam discourages the race, language and colour and gathers ~~one~~ all mankind under the flag of equality. It completely erased the distinction between weak and the powerful and rejection any kind of racial superiority.

Allah Almighty says in Quran:-

خلق الانسان من طين ثم جعل نسله من سائل من ماء مهين.

"And began the creation of man from clay. Then He made his posterity out of the extract of a liquid dejected." (السجدة)

The Prophet (PBUH) in his last sermon gave the message of equality and erased the spirit of nationalism.

Allah Almighty has ordained in the Holy Quran:

ان اسماكم عند الله اتقوا
"Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you"
(المحجرات: 13)

5. Critical Assessment

George Bernard Shaw in his 1936 Opus "The Genuine Islam" is reported to have:

"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high esteem because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to changing phases of existence which can make itself appealing to every age."

6. Conclusion

"Islam" in fact is a descriptive title. Whoever possesses the qualities contained within this description, regardless of his race, community, country or family is a Muslim. According to the Quran among every society and in all ages there have been good and righteous people who possessed these qualities - and all of them were and are Muslims.