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Batch 348

Assignment no 1

Question:

What is Islam? Enlist the Salient features of Islam.

Answer

Islam:-

Islam, where surrender ignites a journey towards peace and meaning, is a profound and potent monotheistic religion that has made an incredible mark on the course of human history. The meaning of the term 'Islam' is rooted in Arabic word 'S-L-M', meaning submission, surrender and peace. Contextually Islam refers to a complete code of life that revolves around surrendering to the divine will of Allah. Different scholars have also defined this concept in varied ways. Al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyyah, for instance, consider it a path of submission to Allah's will, involving a spiritual purification. Allama Muhammad Iqbal introduces a dynamic perspective, portraying Islam as a driving force for individual growth and societal progress. In contemporary thought, Tariq Ramadan underscores Islam's holistic nature, blending spirituality, ethics and activism. On the other hand, western scholars also provide their interpretations of it. Such

as Karen Armstrong emphasizes compassion, John Esposito acknowledges historical contributions. He emphasizes Islam's contributions to art, science and culture, Bernard Lewis characterizes Islam as a comprehensive way of life that governs both religious and secular aspects of existence. Collectively, these perspectives paint a rich tapestry of Islam, including faith, practice, culture and its evolving interaction with the world.

In the context of relationship between God and humanity, Islam suggests a framework of submission and devotion. It's a religion which brings peace to people when they devote themselves to God and accept his guidance.

The Path to serenity:

In its purest sense, Islam is nothing but an insurer of inner peace, moral guidance and profound connection with the divine. Islam is a promoter of peace and calmness. It serves as a path to serenity through its teachings. By practicing acts of worship, following ethical guidelines and cultivating a strong relationship with God, believers find solace. This encourages self-reflection, compassion and contentment, ultimately leading

to a state of serenity and emotional well-being.

'Al-Salam' (A beacon of Powerful message)

Within the name of Allah Almighty 'Al-Salam', the essence of Islam's message shines — the pursuit of peace through submission to Allah's guidance, leads to a life infused with serenity and wholeness.

It means that Islam is the only true religion which brings peace and tranquility, as encapsulated by its teachings in Quran and Sunnah. The Holy Quran repeatedly emphasizes that Allah calls mankind to the "Home of Peace" and guides those who tread the path of Islam towards a life marked by serenity and righteousness. In Surah Al-Baqarah, believers are urged to enter into Islam fully, meaning a commitment to a holistic way of life that includes both faith and practice. Moreover, a hadith from Sahih Bukhari reminds believers to make things easy for others, avoiding unnecessary hardships and to spread positive message instead of creating negativity. So this collective message suggests the fundamental concept that Islam is a religion of peace, one that not only encourages peace but also contribute positively to the well-being of society.

Islam's Unique Status:

Islam's uniqueness lies in the fact that it is regarded as the only true religion according to Quran and Sunnah. For it is stated,

ان الدين عند الله الاسلام

"Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam".

(Al Quran, Surah Al-Iman, 3:19)

It means that Islam stands alone as the true religion acknowledged by Allah himself. As we reflect on its profound significance, it becomes clear that Islam's authenticity is upheld by the divine, making it the ultimate source of spiritual light and a roadmap to a meaningful life.

Islam's Cornerstones

As we explored the remarkable aspects that grant Islam its unique status, it becomes evident that at the heart of this distinctiveness lies a set of foundational beliefs that serves as the cornerstones of faith. These core tenets, encapsulates the essence of what makes Islam a profound and meaningful way of life. The core beliefs/tenets revolve around monotheism (Tawhid), the belief in importance of faith and good deeds and acceptance of guidance provided by Quran & Sunnah.

1. Monotheism (Tawhid): The Foundation of Islam as a Universal Deen.

Islam is founded on the belief in the absolute oneness of God. This principle emphasizes that there is no deity but Allah. As stated in Quran:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۝ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ۝ لَمْ يَلِدْهُ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ۝
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ۝

Say, "He is God, the one ① God, the Absolute ② He begets not, nor was He begotten ③. And there is nothing comparable to Him ④. (Quran, 112: 1-4)

ربنا الله وحده لا شريك له
It reflects that Tawhid is uncompromising, asserting that Allah has no partners, associates or equals.

Considering another verse of Holy Quran:

وَالْحَكَمَ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ مِّنْ لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ
"And your God is one God. There is no deity [worthy of worship] except Him, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful". (Quran, 2:163)

This verse is the clear reference to the concept of monotheism in Islam, rejecting the idea of multiple gods, & emphasizes on sole worship of Allah. Making it clear that pure monotheistic belief eliminates any ambiguity or room for association

of partnership with Allah, setting Islam apart from other belief systems. Tawhid also promotes direct connection between individual and Allah. So Muslims don't need intermediaries or priests to communicate with God. So it fosters a sense of responsibility & enhances spirituality. It also encourages ethics and morality. Lastly, tawhid extends its message to all of humanity, emphasizing that all people, regardless of their background can connect with true God. As reflected in verses:

يا ايها الناس اعبدوا ربكم الذي خلقكم والذين
من قبلكم لعلكم تتقون

"O Mankind, worship your lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous".
(Quran, 2:21)

This verse addresses all of humanity and invites all to worship one true God. This underscores the universality of the message of Islam and the inclusiveness of Tawhid. Inviting people from all walks of life to their creator. So, Islam's monotheism is a guiding light, uniting believers under the banner of one God, making it a religion as unique as it is profound.

2. Faith and Good Deeds : "Iman and Amal"

Belief in Islam goes beyond just acknowledging God's presence. It includes sincere faith (Iman) and commitment to following God's guidance, accompanied by righteous actions (Amal). Quran and Sunnah both emphasize the importance of faith and good deeds. As stated in (Surah Al-Muminun, verse 1-11)

"Mentions the characteristics of successful believers, who combine faith with righteous deeds."

Conclusion

As it's very clear that in the tapestry of faith, Islam shines as a thread of serenity, woven with the message of Al-Salam, unique in its status and fortified by the cornerstones of monotheism and virtuous deeds. With its universal allure and timeless wisdom, Islam beckons humanity to embrace the path of tranquility, offering a powerful and enduring journey for hearts and minds alike.

Salient features of Islam

1. The Guiding Light - "Quran as the Holy scripture of Islam"

In the heart of Islam's teachings lies a profound source of guidance that has illuminated the lives of

of believers for centuries. Quran, 'The Book of Allah', is the primary scripture of Islam and forms the cornerstones of faith, moral values and practical guidance for daily living. As the Quran itself declares,

شهر رمضان الذي انزل فيه القرآن هدى للناس وبينت
من الهدى والفرقان

"The month of Ramadan [is that] in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion". (Al-Quran, 2:185)

Hence, it proves that Quran is the ultimate source of guidance and it is within the verses of Quran that Muslims find solace, direction and inspiration as they face the difficulties of life. Indeed Quran is not a mere compilation of words, but a source of spiritual nourishment that gives meaning to life.

2) Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): "A beacon of light
guiding humanity"

لقد كان لكم في رسول الله اسوة حسنة لمن كان
يرجو الله واليوم الآخر.

"Indeed in the Messenger of Allah you have

an excellent example for whoever has hope in Allah and in Last Day." (Al-Quran, 33:21)

These words from Quran serve as a testament to the profound impact of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s life and teachings. As the final messenger sent by Allah, his existence illuminated the path of righteousness, compassion, and social justice for believers across the ages. Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad, known as Al-Amin because of his honesty, was not only the best teacher but also a dedicated social justice activist, embodying virtues that continue to inspire. He taught about all the aspects of life from rules to showing straight path both practically through his actions and teachings. For instance, he said:

"None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself"

This Hadith teaches the message to treat others as we want to be treated, guiding us towards the path of kindness, empathy, and fairness. By embodying such teachings in his life, he demonstrated the way to lead a morally upright life.

3) A complete way of life.

Islam is described as the religion of truth and embodies the complete code of life, which Allah Almighty, the creator of universe, has revealed for the guidance of mankind. It includes all the aspects of life to guide the humankind such as:

1) Spiritual Aspect

One of the fundamental pillars of Islam's complete way of life is its emphasis on spirituality. The connection between Allah and human. And it is emphasized in Quran repeatedly, considering the verse

فاذكروني اذكركم

"So remember me, I will remember you"

(Al Quran, 2:152)

This verse is beautifully emphasizing on the importance of spirituality. It fosters a strong relationship between man and his God through regular prayers, supplications, and act of worship.

2) Social Aspect

Islam promotes unity and community cohesion, and encourages the believers to work together, support each other and uphold strong family bonds.

And this can be seen in numerous verses and Ahadiths lets explore some of them.

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا

"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah, and don't be divided". (Al Quran, 3:103)

"The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy are just like one body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and pain" (Sahih-Al-Bukhari)

So this beautifully illustrates the concept of brotherhood and community in Islam. It not only encourages on the importance of brotherhood but also prioritize strong family bonds and treating all the members of society with respect and compassion. Moreover, Islam's social teachings advocate for fairness and justice in interaction with others. The practice of giving Zakat further solidifies the interconnectedness of believers.

3) Practical Aspect

Islam guides believers in practical matters as well by combining faith with patience, determination and proactive efforts to overcome life's challenges.

As the Quran instructs us,

يا ايها الذين ءامنوا استعينوا بالصبر والصلوة

"O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer" (Al-Quran, 2:153)

4) Economic Aspect

Islam provides principles for ethical economic practices, discouraging corruption, exploitation, and unjust financial dealings. The 20th century Islamic scholar ^{waqif} Allah Sushanah says in Quran, "And do not consume one another's wealth unjustly or send it [in bribery] to the rulers in order that [they might aid] you [to] consume a portion of wealth of people in sin, while you know [It is unlawful]"

(Al-Quran, 2:188).

In conclusion, Islam's all-encompassing nature is evident in its ability to address various facets of human existence. Quran verses and sunnah provide timeless guidance across these aspects, encouraging believers to lead a balanced and fulfilling life that aligns with principles of faith and virtue.

4. Respect for Diversity

Islam teaches the value of treating all individuals with fairness and kindness regardless of their background, ethnicity or beliefs, rejecting all the concepts like racism, unfairness etc. Quran emphasizes the creation of humanity in diverse nations and tribes.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said,

"All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority on Arab; a white has no superiority over black nor does black have superiority over white, none have superiority over another except by piety and good deeds".

5. Permanence and Change:

Islam provides enduring principles and beliefs while also adapting to the changing circumstances of the world. The Quran is considered timeless and unchanging, providing a foundation of faith. This balance between permanence in core beliefs and adaptability in practical applications helps Islam remain relevant and

meaningful across different eras and cultures.

The permanence of core beliefs can be seen in verses that emphasize the unchanging nature of divine guidance. For instance,

Surah Al-Rum (30:30) states,

"So set your purpose for religion as a man upright, the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He has created man. There is no altering (the laws of) Allah's creation; that is the right religion, but most men don't know".
