

Q - What is Islam? Describe salient features of Islam.

Ans - Islam: The literal meaning of the word "Islam" is "obedience", "surrender" or "peace". Contentually, Islam is the name of the religion that has the basic foundation in entering into peace by surrendering to the will of Allah Almighty.

An Imam Ghazali very briefly and accurately described Islam as "the name of fulfilling rights of Allah and rights of people". This brief description sums up the entire scope of Islam, it is the religion of Allah as well as people, a complete code of life. It is a monotheist religion that guides one through all the chapters of life and entails all the concepts of growth, understanding, life that a person needs at various points of his/her life.

Islam is the religion that propagates the message of oneness of Allah. It is a religion for entire mankind, not restricted to a specific geographic boundary, ethnic community, not bound by a specific time period and this is what makes Islam a universal religion.

In the Holy Quran, Allah has been addressed as "God of Humankind" and not as "God of Muslims" and this is what forms the basic foundation of the religion Islam, its universalism and not particularism.

Islam

Valient Features of Islam:

Concept of "Tawheed" (Oneness of Allah): Tawheed or the concept of oneness of Allah forms the core of religion in Islam. The importance of this concept can be understood in the light of the following Hadith:-

"Islam is like a fort and Tawheed is like the gate of that fort."

A person who enters Islam or calls himself/herself a Muslim has to surrender to the concept of Tawheed that forms the foundation of religion.

1) Prophet hood & its Finality:- Another very important feature of Islam is faith on Prophets of Allah. It does not end here, the faith should be extended to the fact that Prophet hood reached its finality and was ended with the last Prophet, Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H).

2) Islam - A Complete Code of Life:- Islam is not just a religion but complete code of life. It encompasses all the spheres of life and provides a well-defined roadmap to follow. The role of Islam begins in a person's life with his/her birth and till death, all the major and minor events of the person's life are shaped by it. The scope is not just on individual basis, but is extended to collective / societal basis as well. It can be briefly categorized as follows:-

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|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| → Individual, Child Birth | } | → Collect. Level |
| → Education, Family, Peers | | → Education System |
| → Employment, Business | | → Political/Finance System |
| → Day to Day Activities | | → Social System |
| | | |

4) - Islam and Humanity: Islam is a religion for humanity. It promotes practices and beliefs that link even small acts of kindness with rewards. To briefly understand this, the best reference would be that of Holy Prophet Hussain Muhammad's (PBUH) farewell pilgrimage sermon. It could be regarded as the most comprehensive and visionary charter of human rights. The main features of the last sermon are enlisted as follows:-

- > Hurt no one
- > Elimination of racism
- > Treating women well
- > Treating slaves well

Not just this, Islam has set clear boundaries for any kind of inhumane activity or manipulation/lampering of environment, food items, animals, plants and other things that constitute the environment.

5) - A Systematic and Organized Religion: Islam, in all its affairs and events, has been seen as a very systematic and organized religion. Since the world came into being, Allah kept sending Prophets and Holy Books for the guidance of human beings. Prophet hood came to its end with the death of Holy Prophet (PBUH). What made Islam systematic was its step by step approach with the arrival of basic messages or "revelations" in the beginning, developing a know-how first and then moving towards complex subjects once the followers were ready and knowledgeable enough to understand. Other than that, a complete scheme of things, a

proper channel of communication with angels descending with Allah's message, revealing it to the Prophet, Prophet revealing it to the followers and world at large, and not only revealing but practicing what reached to him, made Islam a systematic and organized religion.

6/- Concept of "Qadr": The concept of "Qadr" of Allah refers to the fact that All is all aware, all knowledgeable and the most powerful. Certain verses from Holy Quran build this concept in its entirety.
"But you can not will until Allah will"
"Not even a leaf falls without His knowledge."

7/- Spirituality: As mentioned before, Islam is a complete religion, a complete code of life but it should not be mistaken as a religion that puts forward the rules to follow and ways to abide by. Islam, at every phase, requires its followers to build a spiritual connection with their creator. It requires to form a link so deep that without His (Allah's) presence, the life would lose its meaning. The concept of spirituality lies in the following verse of Quran:-
"Verily, in the remembrance of Allah, the hearts find peace."

8/- Holy Quran: The book that consists of the entire idea / notion of religion is Islam. It documents the commandments of Allah, His message to the mankind; explains the situations with various contents; clearly

differentiates the boundaries and conveys the actual purpose of a person's life.

9) - Pillars of Islam: Broadly, Islam has five pillars that sum up the rituals, ideas and paths, a Muslim is expected to adhere to, the pillars are:-

→ Declaration of Faith (Shahada)

→ Prayer (Salah)

→ Alms-giving (Zakat)

→ Fasting (Sawm)

→ Holy Pilgrimage (Hajj)

10) - Day of Judgement and Life Hereafter: Faith on the day of judgement, resurrection and the life hereafter is an important part of Islam. Allah has reminded Muslims time and again that this world and everything that comes with it is temporary. The only purpose that ^{one} must have, should be the faith that all the good deeds one performs in this world will help him/her achieve the ultimate success that will be granted in the life hereafter.