

ISLAMIC STUDIES:-

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QUESTION:-

What is Islam? Enlist the salient features of Islam.

Ans:-

INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM:-

→ MEANING OF ISLAM:-

→ LEXICOLOGICAL MEANING:-

Islam is derived from the Arabic word SUM which means peace (Salam), submission and surrender. These different meanings are due to relation and interaction between man to man and man to God. On the vertical level i.e., God-to-man relation, Islam means submission and on the horizontal level i.e., man-to-man relation, Islam means peace. So, it is understood that by maintaining good relations with other human being will give you peace but the beauty of Islam is far beyond than this.

→ CONTEXTUAL MEANING:-

The diverse beauty of Islam could be understood through its contextual meaning, which is: 'To enter in peace by submitting to the will of Allah' and 'Submission of desires to the will of Allah'. So, ^{according to} in Islam, one can attain peace by not only good relations with other beings but by submission to Allah as well. According to Dr. Zakir

Naik "Islam means entering in peace by submitting your will to Almighty Allah". Another scholar, Imam Rahnib, also have the same view. According to him, "Islam means entering into Salam, and Salam and Silm both signify peace."

So, from where is this peace coming from? Who is the originator or creator of this peace? Among the 99 names of Allah, one is As-Salam. So, it is Allah who created the peace and it is Him who glorify His creatures with the unlimited peace if they abide by the rules and regulations of Allah Almighty.

→ MEANING ACCORDING TO SHARIAH:-

Another beautiful aspect of Islam is that it is against compulsion of any kind. In Holy Qur'an Allah says,

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرِّشْقُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ
فَعَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ فَتَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

Translation: There shall be no compulsion in

[acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong, ^{so} and whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in God/Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. (Surah Al-Baqra: 256)

So, from the above verse, the meaning of Islam according to Shariah could be concluded as:

"To enter in peace by submitting to [#]will of Allah voluntarily"

The word voluntarily it is the here, distinguishes Islam from other religions. Islam does not want any compulsion and respects the will of a person. In another verse of the Qur'an, Allah says,

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ (٦)
Translation: For you & your religion and for me is my religion. (Surah-Al-Kafiroon: 6)

This verse was revealed at that time when the followers of different religions were trying to diverge Holy Prophet (PBUH) towards their religion by saying that they will only accept Islam if Holy Prophet (PBUH) accept their religion. So, Allah reveal the verse by giving them assurity that if they don't want to accept Islam, then they shouldn't.

Therefore, it should be concluded that Islam is a peaceful religion and don't want any kind of compulsion.

⇒ DEFINITIONS OF ISLAM:-

There are different definitions of Islam, defined by Holy Prophet (PBUH) and other scholars. Some of them are given below. The purpose behind these different definitions is to understand different aspects of Islam.

→ SEWJAR DEFINITIONS:-

According to Meriam-Webster dictionary, Islam is "the religious & faith of Muslims including the belief in Allah as the sole deity and in Muhammad (PBUH) as His messenger."

→ ISLAMIC DEFINITION:-

"The complete way of life (Deen) that Almighty has revealed for humanity so they may attain peace and success in this world and in the Hereinafter."

→ DEFINITION BY HOLY PROPHET (PBUH):-

According to Holy Prophet (PBUH), Islam is

the combination of two things, one is the witness of Allah and His messenger and other is the belief in pillars of Islam.

→ It should be noted from this definition that Islam will be incomplete if one of these things are ignored. The five pillars of Islam are those basic things that form the building of high belief on Allah and His messenger. The worship and completion of all these pillars revolve around Allah and belief on His messenger.

→ DEFINITIONS BY SCHOLARS:-

Different scholars defined Islam in a different way: According to Imam Ghazali: "Islam is the combination of two things, belief rights of Allah and rights of people." This definition revolves around the achievement of peace which is the fundamental meaning of Islam. By fulfilling the rights of Allah, one will achieve the internal peace of mind and by fulfilling the rights of people according to Shariah, one will achieve the external peace of mind.

According to Sadar-ud-din Islahi (Book: Islam at a glance): "Islam is the combination of two things, one is faith and other is rituals." The mentioning/presence of faith in the definition of Islam, highlights the importance of faith in Islam. In a Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

"Indeed, actions are the result of their intentions."

A good person with a good faith will have a good intention, and with this good intention if he tries to do something good, he will get its reward.

Positive faith → Good intentions → Good deeds → Reward

=> SALIENT FEATURES OF ISLAM:-

Allah has given Human many abilities, i.e., the ability to speak, to hear, to work and to walk and eat and drink etc. One of the such and important ability that distinguishes human from an animal is to think. Human has the ability to think about the existence of itself and its surroundings. As a religion, Islam has many unique features that distinguishes it from other religions and a person with good thinking ability will be able to witness these features as unique as well. Once, they believe in these features, they will enter in Islam as well. Some of the unique or salient features of Islam are as follows:

1. TAWHEED - THE BED ROCK OF ISLAM:-

Tawheed is derived from the word 'Ahad' which means One, Oneness of God. It is first and most important pillar and belief of Islam. Even, while entering into Islam, the first Kalimah that he recites starts with:

"There is none worthy of worship except Allah."

Allama Shibli Nomani in his book Seerat-un-Nabi, quoted Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as:

"Tawheed is the first chapter of Islamic syllabus."

From the above verse and Hadith of Holy Prophet (PBUH), it is clear that no one can enter in Islam or can be a Muslim ^{with} if He/she accepts the Oneness of Allah. One should be able to identify the cause of their living, the existence of earth and sky and the processes of nature. They should have a faith that Allah is the One who is the creator of all these things.

2.

PROPHETHOOD:-

The other unique feature of Islam is Prophethood. Allah has sent His Prophets among human to guide them towards the right path, the path chose by Allah. Professor Khurshid Ahmad in his book Islam, its meaning and message quoted Qur'an as about the sayings of Prophets in different verses collectively as: "I am to you God's apostle, worthy of all trusts. So be committed to God, Fear Him, and obey me." This indicates that Prophets are the messengers of Allah. The believe on Prophethood requires the believe on all Prophets of Allah and most importantly the belief on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the last Prophet of Allah. In Qur'an Allah

says:

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ ابًا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنْكُمْ وَكَانَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا تَجَمَّعَ الْبَشَرُ
Translation: Muhammad is not the father of [any] of your men, but [he is] the messenger of Allah and last of the Prophets. (Surah-Al-Ahzab:40)

Abraham Amini in his book Prophethood and the Prophets in Islam quoted the narration of Abu Huraira as: The Messenger of Allah (s) said, "I have been sent for all the people of the world and the Prophethood has ended with me."

From the above verse, and Hadith, it is concluded that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the last Prophet of Allah and there will be no prophet after him. The importance of belief on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as last Prophet and messenger of Allah could be extract extracted from the 2nd and last part of Kalimah, without which the Kalimah is incomplete.

Muhammad (PBUH) is the messenger of Allah - مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

3. COMPLETE CODE OF LIFE

Islam is a complete code of life. It guides in every aspect of life whether individual or collective. This could be confirmed from the following verses of

ولقد مررنا في هذا القرآن من كل مثل

Translation: And We have certainly diversified in this Qur'an for the people from every [kind of] example (Surah Al-Kahaf: 54)

Islam not only guides in everything but in Qur'an Allah also gave surity to be with those who follow the straight path and have faith on Him. In Qur'an, Allah says,

قال لا تخافا اني معكما اسمع واني

Translation: [Allah] said, "Fear not, I am with you both; I hear and I see. (Surah Al-Ta-haa: 46)

4. HUMANITY - ISLAM FOR WHOLE HUMANITY:-

Islam teaches about humanity. The importance of humanity in Islam could be concluded from the verse in Qur'an:

من قتل نفسا بغير نفس او فسادا في الارض فكانما قتل الناس كليا ومن احياها فكانما احيا الناس كليا

Translation: Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption (done) in the land, it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one, it is as if he had saved mankind entirely. (Surah-Al-Maeda: 32)

5. UNIVERSALITY OF ISLAM:-

Islam is a universal religion. In Qur'an Allah says,

ان الدين عند الله الاسلام

Translation: Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. (Surah-Al-Imran: 19)

In a very first part of Qur'an, Allah says,

الذو الجلال والإكرام رب العالمين

[All] praises is [due] to Allah - the lord of the worlds.
(Surah - Al-Fat'ha : 1)

So, from the latter verse 'the lord of the worlds' is Allah and from former verse the ^{best} religion in sight of Allah is Islam. So, if the One who is the lord of the worlds talks about the ^{any} religion as His favorite or only religion, then that religion would be universal and for all worlds as well. George Bernard Shaw in his 1936 opus 'The Genuine Islam' is reported to say that:

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

So, it should be concluded that Islam is the universal religion. It is ^{neither} not confined to a specific time zone or geography nor for a specific ethnicity.

6. SIMPLICITY AND RATIONALITY:-

Islam is a simple religion. It does not ^{have} any complicated rites and rituals. Moreover, it has not any complex hierarchy of priests. One should simply follow the teachings of Allah and His Prophet, Muhammad (PBUH).

Islam also teaches human to think about its existence and nature and increase their knowledge. In Holy Qur'an Allah ^{has} wants human to pray as:

(Surah - Al-Taha : 114)

وقل رب زدني علما

Translation: And say, "My lord, increase me in knowledge"

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also guided humans about the importance of gaining knowledge, which

could be verified through one of his Hadith:

"Whoever goes out seeking knowledge is in the way of Allah until he returns." (Sunan-Al-Tirmidhi-2641)

27. PRACTICALITY:-

One of the unique feature of Islam is its practicality. All of its teachings and methods are easily practicable. Along with faith and on Allah and belief on the pillars, Islam also wants these pillars to be practiced so that to enhance faith of on Allah. Religion is something to be practiced lived, and not an object of mere lip-service. Both faith and practice are incomplete without each other. In order to get reward from Allah, one should ^{or have both} faith and practicality, as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ

Translation: Those who have believed and done righteous deeds, a good state is of theirs and a good return. (Surah Ar-Raad: 29)

Holy Prophet (PBUH) quoted by Professor Khurshid Ahmad highlights the importance of practicality as: "God does not accept belief, if it is not expressed in deeds, and does not accept deeds, if they do not conform to the belief."

28. UNITY OF MATTER & SPIRIT:-

Another unique feature of Islam is that it unites both matter and spirit. Islam don't want someone to become ^{either} only spiritual ^{either} or materialistic. However, Islam teaches to follow both matter and spirit. In Holy Qur'an, Allah guides us to recite:

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Translation: "Our lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is]

good and protect us from punishment of the Fire."
(Surah-Al-Baqra: 201)

In another verse of Qur'an, Allah says,

وَكُلُوا وَشَرِبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا
Translation: And eat and drink, but be not excessive.
(Surah-Al-A'raf: 31)

In the first verse, Allah taught Humans to ask for worldly things and goods as well but in the latter part, verse, Allah also mentioned the limit and boundaries that should not be exceeded. So, a Muslim is allowed to enjoy enjoyment and world but within the limit prescribed by Allah and Holy Prophet (PBUH).

9. BALANCE BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL LIFE AND SOCIETY:-

Islam teaches about the balance between an individual life and his societal life. One should not be limited to himself ^{but} and should work ^{as well} for his society. On the other hand, one should not be limited to ^{only} society but should do something for himself as well. Professor Khurshid Ahmad quoted Muhammad (PBUH) about living together as: "Live together, do not turn against each other, make things easy for others and do not put obstacles in each other's path/way."

10. PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF TEACHINGS:-

Islam is the only religion whose teachings are protected and preserved in its real/original form. While talking about the protection, the responsibility of its protection is taken ^{by} Allah the creator of the universe itself. In Holy Qur'an, Allah says,

إِنَّا كُنَّا نُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ بِمَا نُنَادِيكُمْ بِهِ وَنَكُونَ مُنْجِبِينَ
Translation: Indeed, it is He who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardians. Surah-Al-Mubarak
(Surah-Al-Hijr: 9)

About the preservation of teachings, the teachings of other religions are not in the purest form now. As mentioned in the Qur'an by Allah as well:

كَيْفَ تَقُولُ الْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَالِيكُم مَّا كَانَتْ تَأْتِيكُم بِهَا لِسَانَكُم مَّا كُنْتُمْ بِهَا عَادِلِينَ غَفَلْتُم عَن ذٰلِكَ كُنْتُمْ عٰدِلِيْنَ

Translation: They distort words from their [proper] usages and have forgotten a portion of that of which they were reminded. (Surah-Al-Maeda: 13)

Apart from other religions, only teachings of Islam are preserved in its purest and original form in the form of Qur'an and in millions of hearts of Muslims.

⇒ CONCLUSION:-

From meaning to the definitions of Islam and then to its salient features, the concept and importance of Islam could be concluded with the help of quote of Andre Server (a French historian), which is as follows:

"Islam was not a torch, as it has been claimed, but was an extinguisher."

So, it is concluded that Islam not only guides you about the path to follow but will also give you the power and strength to remain consistent on the right path and to fight for your with those (even with yourself) who hinders you from going into the straight and right path.

good answer overall!!!