

Question-1.

What is Islam? Enlist the salient features of Islam.

Introduction of Islam :-

The word Islam means submission and peace; Submission to the moral imperat^{ives} of one and only God. On the vertical level God to men relationship is submission and on the horizontal level men to men relation is peace. The true love of God and submission^{ship} to his commands is the guarantor of peace and harmony among his creatures. In its purest thing, Islam is nothing but the act of devoutly loving God and being just and benevolent to his creatures. Allah is Al-Salam, which is one of his ninety nine most beautiful names. It means he is the source and originator of all peace, the peace that need to permeate every aspect of his Cosmos, especially human society. The very first of Quran:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①
 "In the name of Allah, the most merciful, the most compassionate"

And, the same theme of mercy and love is repeatedly repeated throughout

-the Quran for 114 times. In the same way Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is mentioned as "رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ" - "mercy for all creation". Paradise too is the eternal abode of peace. In short Allah Almighty and his teachings are geared to bring harmony and peace. The Quran refers to Islam as the "Path of Peace" - "سَبِيلَ السَّلَامِ" (Al-maida 5:16). The ideal society according to Islam is "Dar al-Salam" which means the abode of Peace. (Yunus 10:25). Therefore, Islam is the religion that promotes peace in individual and social life of human beings. Islam inculcates the way of life. And emphasizes on the practice of rules and laws of Allah in every aspect of life. Allah says: "إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ" - "Indeed the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam" (Al-Imran 3:19)

The definition of Islam according to Islamic scholars:

(i) Imam Raghīb al-Isfahani (d.1108)

In his "Al-Mufradat fi Gharaib al-Quran" he says "Islam is law is of two kinds: one is a simple confession with the tongue --- the other is that along with confession, there is a belief in the heart and fulfillment in practice and resignation to God in whatever He brings to pass or decrees". Imam Raghīb further says "Islam means entering into Salam,

and Salam and Salim both signify peace".

(ii) Sayed Ameer Ali (1849-1928)

Sayed Ameer in his epic book "The Spirit of Islam" defines Islam as "Salam", in its primary sense means, to be tranquil, at rest, to have done ones duty, to have paid up, to be at perfect peace. In its secondary sense to surrender oneself to him with whom peace is made.

The concept of Islam :-

(i) Islam signifies and requires submission not only in belief and worship but also in ethics, morality, politics, culture, social behaviors, laws, economics, national and international affairs, both in individual and collective spheres. Submission to the divine commands of Allah ensures peace and harmony. It enables men to make peace with other human beings on one hand and Allah on the other hand. This submission does not take away his individual freedom. It frees the mind from superstitions and fills it with truth and metaphysical reality.

(ii) The fundamental concept of Islam is based on the notion that whole universe is created by Allah. He created man for fixed period of life to be lived on the

earth as a trust and test. Allah has prescribed a divine code of life for man and granted freedom to follow this code or not. As in Surah Kahf Allah says:

قَفَّيْنَا مَثَلًا لِّالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَمَثَلًا لِّالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا -

"Who soever wants, he should believe; and who soever wants, he should disbelieve."

Those who follow the code revealed by Allah are considered Muslims while those who decline to follow the same are termed as Kuffar.

(iii)

Islam has been revealed for the guidance of mankind. For the proper development of human life man needs two elements (a) the resources to maintain life and to fulfill the material needs of individual and society (b) knowledge of the principles of social behavior and individual behavior to enable man to fulfill himself and to maintain justice and tranquility in human life. The Lord of universe has provided for both of these in full measure. To cater the human needs of man he has put all of nature's resources at his disposal. To provide for his spiritual, social and cultural needs, he has raised his prophets from among man and has revealed to them the code of life that can guide men's steps to the right path. This code of life is known as Islam, the religion preached by all

prophets of God.

- (iv) The essence of basic Islamic concept consist of the idea that is not not enough to practice Islam in the personal life only, but that the teachings of the Quran and those of the Sunnah need also be implemented in their totality in the social, economic and political fields. In other words It implies the establishment of the sovereignty of Allah in the "sacred" as well as the "mundane" domains, or the removal of the dichotomy between collective life and state authority on one hand and Divine guidance on the other.

Principle bases of the foundation of Islamic Systems:-

- (a) A belief in the unity, immateriality, power, mercy, and supreme love of the creator.
- (b) Charity and brotherhood among mankind.
- (c) Subjugation of the passions
- (d) The outpouring of the grateful heart to the giver of all good; and
- (e) Accountability for human actions in another existence.

The belief system of Islam is comprised of five faiths:

- (1) Belief in the Oneness of God (Tawhid)

It is the concept of monotheism upon which Islam's entire religious adherence rests. It unequivocally holds that God is indivisibly one and single. The first part of Shahada is the declaration of Tawhid. Allah says in Quran:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۝ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ۝ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ۝
 اللَّهُ ۝ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ۝

"Say he is one. Allah is he on whom Allah depends. He begets not, nor is he begotten. And none is like him. (Al-Ikhlās 112:1-4)

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ
 الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ۝

"I am God and there is no other God. Worship me and keep up prayers for my remembrance."

(ii) Belief in Prophets and the guidance that they bequeathed (Risala)

Prophethood is bestowed by Allah and is his special blessing on chosen ones, the Prophets. To believe in prophets means to believe in the revelation that he has received by Allah. Every Prophet of Allah according to Quran is sent to build up and strengthen the relationships between people and Allah.

اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ خَيْرًا مِمَّنْ سَأَلْتَهُ ۝

Allah knows best on whom he bestow prophethood." (Al-An'am 6:124)

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۝ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ ۝

"He does not speak according to personal desires but says only what is revealed to him"

(An-Najam: 3-4)

(iii) Belief in Angels (Malaikah)

According to Islam Muslims should believe in the existence of Angels, that they are created by Allah from light. They do not sleep, marry, eat and drink nor have personal desires.

لَا يُفْعَوْنَ الْوَدَّعَ وَلَا يَمْرُؤُونَ وَلَا يَعْزُونَ مَا
يُؤْمَرُونَ ۝

"They disobey not God in what he has commanded them, but do all that they are commanded". (Al-Thar'um 66:6)

يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ ۝

"They glorify him day and night, never wavering. (Al-Anbiya 21:20)

(iv) Belief in Holy books (Kutub)

Muslims believe that Allah has sent down some books upon his messengers to clarify and complete his past messages in order to guide people aright.

إِنَّ قَدْ آتَيْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ الْأُولَىٰ ذِكْرًا لِّمَنْ كَانَ يَأْتِيهِمْ
مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ ۝

This is certainly mentioned in the early scriptures. The scriptures of Ibrahim and Moosa.

تَنْزِيلَ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ ۝

"The revelation of Quran is from Allah, the exalted in might, the wise.

(Al-Zumar: 1)

(v) Belief in the day of judgment (Akhirat)

Belief in Akhirat means this life is temporary and after death one has to receive judgment regarding his deeds in life. Holy Prophet PBUH said "You will have to die, like you sleep and you^{will} have to get up as you awake."

(Al-Hadith)

مَنْ كَانَ يَرْبُو حَزْرَةَ الْآخِرَةِ يَرْبُو لِي فِي
حَزْرَةِ دُنْيَا مَنْ كَانَ يَرْبُو حَزْرَةَ الدُّنْيَا يَرْبُو
فِيهَا وَقَالَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ تَصِيبِ ①

"Whoever desires the harvest of hereafter, we will increase their harvest, and whoever desires only the desire of this world, we will give them some of it, but they will have no share in hereafter."

(Surah Al-Shura 42:20)

Salient features of Islam :-**(1) Unique concept of Tawhid :-**

Islam has the unique concept of monotheism as in the first part of Shahadah it's evident which says:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَدِيمُ الَّذِي لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْهَوْلُ وَالْجُنُونُ
وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوْحِي
إِلَيْهِ آيَاتِنَا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ .

"We never sent a messenger before you O Prophet without revealing to him
"There is no God worthy of worship except me, so worship me alone."

(ii)

Islam: The religion of ease:-

It is the religion that is best suited to the nature of people. One does not need to go to the level of extremes of hardship or slack but rather provides a medium route, in other words a religion of ease. "Allah intends for you ease, and does not want to make things difficult for you" (Surah Baqrah)

That is why Allah SWT picked the most qualified person for this mission. The simplicity of this religion was implemented by the noblest of humanity, the one who came to convey the word, as Allah SWT stated!

"Verily there has come to you a messenger from amongst yourselves, it grieves him that you should suffer any difficulty, he is anxious for you for the believers, he is full of pity and merciful". (Al-Yurus)

Abu Huraira R.A narrated that Prophet PBUH stated that "Religion is easy...".

(Bukhari)

He also said:

"The best of your religion is the easiest".

(Ahmad)

(iii)

Simplicity, Rationality and Practicality

Islam is the religion without mythology. Its teachings are simple and intelligible. It is free from superstitions and irrational beliefs. The Oneness of God, the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) and the concepts of life after death are the basic articles of its faith. All these are based on reason and sound logic. There is no hierarchy of Priests, no fetched abstractions, no complicated rites and rituals. Everybody may approach the Quran directly and translate its dictate into practical Islam. Islam awakens in man the faculty of reason and exhorts him to use his intellect. It enjoins him to see things in the light of reality.

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ -

"Say, are those who know and those who do not know alike?"

(Al-Zumar 39:17)

Those who do not observe and understand are worse than cattle:

(Al-Araf 7:179)

"That whosoever is been given knowledge indeed has been given abundant good."

(Al-Baqarah 2:269)

(iv) Complete way of life:-

Islam is not a religion in common and distorted sense, for it does not confine its scope to one's private life. It is the complete way of life and is present in every field of human existence. Islam provides guidance for all aspects of life, individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural and national and international. The Quran enjoins man to embrace Islam without any reservation and to follow the guidance of God in all areas of life. Allah says in the Quran:

"We have revealed to you a book which clarifies every matter".
(16:89)

Islam is the constituent part of life. It tells us how to manage all activities of life in a sound and ethical way.

(v) Balance between individual and society:-

Islam believes in individual personality of man and holds everyone personally accountable to God. It guarantees the fundamental rights of the individual and does not permit anyone to tamper with them. It makes the proper development of the personality of man. It does not subscribe to the view that man must

lose its individuality in society or in the state.

وَأَنْ لَيْسَ لِلإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى - وَأَنْ يَسْجُدَ
سَبُوحًا يُرَى - لَشَرِّ بَعْزَةِ الْجَزَاءِ الأَوْفَى -
"And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for. And that his striving shall soon be seen. Then shall he be rewarded for it with the fullest reward - Man shall have nothing but what he strives for?"

(Al-Najm 53:39)

On the other hand it also awakes a sense of social responsibility in man. Organizes human beings in a society and a state, and enjoins the individual to subscribe to the social good. Prayer in Islam is offered in congregation, a situation that inculcates social discipline among Muslims. Everyone is enjoined to pay Zakat and it has been laid down in the Quran that,

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِلاَّهُمْ حَقٌّ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ -
"And in their property was a portion due to him who begs and to him who denies?"

(Al-Zariyat 51:19)

(vi) Universality and humanism:

The message of Islam is for whole of humanity and universal. God in Islam is God for all the world and Prophet is prophet for all the mankind.

Islam is international in its outlook and approach and does not admit barriers, distinctions based on color, clan, blood or territory. Islam rejects all prejudices, racism, and nationalism. Prophet Muhammad PBUH in his last sermon at Hijaat ul wida clarified: "No any Arab has superiority over non Arab and neither any non Arab has superiority over Arab".

Islam has still further service to the cause of humanity. It stands after all nearer to the real East than Europe does, and it possesses a magnificent tradition of inter-racial understanding and co-operation. The Prophet said:

"All creatures of God form the family of God and he is the best loved of God who love best his creatures." Lord! Lord of my life and of everything in the universe I affirm that all human beings are brothers of to one another".

Quran for the universality of Prophethood says:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
إِلَيْكُمْ كَمَا كُنْتُ

"O Prophet! I am but a messenger from God to you all."

(Al-Araf 7:158)

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾
 "We have sent you only as a
 mercy for everybody in the universe"
 (Al Quran)

Islam as the religion of
 peace promotes harmony and equality.
 It emphasizes on the creation of
 the society of moral values, justice,
 unity and free from racism and
 discrimination. Islam is not just for
 muslims but for all the humanity.
 Therefore Prophet PBUH is called
 ﴿رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾ - a blessing for the
 universes. Islam enforces the rights
 of humans & animals, and calls it
 mandatory to be just regarding
 these. While rights of Allah upon
 its creatures is the personal
 matter of Allah and humans, he
 can forgive mistakes of people
 regarding his rights but if duties
 are not fulfilled one has to face
 his resentment. Not only this Islam
 provides a complete code of life to
 live properly in the world and get
 success in hereafter. Thus Islam
 is a blessing for the humanity.