

Q/ What is Islam and enlist its salient features?

INTRODUCTION;

Islam is an Arabic word which means submission to surrender and obedience. As a religion, it stands for complete submission and obedience to Almighty Allah alone. The basic concept of Islam is that the entire universe was created by Allah. He is the lord of universe which He alone sustains. A man becomes Muslim, believing in and professing faith in unity of God and Prophethood of Muhammad (P.B.U.H)

MEANING OF ISLAM;

The literal meaning of Islam is submission, derived from the word 'Salam' which means peace. The contentual meaning of this word is to enter in peace by submitting to the will of Allah.

As quoted in Quran (2: 256),

"Let there be no compulsion in religion, for the truth stands out clearly from falsehood -"

According to Dr. Hamidullah in 'Introduction to Islam', "Islam is a monotheist religion revealed upon Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him)."

According to Imam Ghazali, "Islam is a combination of Rights of Allah and Rights of people -"

According to Asrar Ahmad, "Islam - the teachings of Quran and Sunnah - must be implemented in social, cultural, judicial, political, and economic spheres of life -"

ISLAMIC SHARIAH MEANING;

Shariah meaning of Islam is to obey the religion of Allah defined by his prophets. It means to follow the teachings and principles by our own will. Moreover, it also means to align your will according to the will of God and surrender your desires to his will. In one hadith reported by Hazrat Omar R.A, he said, "We were sitting with messenger of Allah, one day, and a man with white clothes appeared and asked Prophet Muhammad, 'O Muhammad! tell me about Islam,' the Prophet said, 'Islam is to testify - there is no God but Allah and Muhammad (S.A.W.W) is the messenger of Allah; to establish prayer, to give charity, to fast the month of Ramadan and to perform pilgrimage to house, if a way is possible.' The above mentioned Hadith declares Islam as the only true and perfect religion revealed to humans through Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). Following are the salient features of Islam;

① TAUHEED;

Tauheed is defined as 'oneness'. It's a revolutionary concept which includes the whole essence of the teachings of Islam. To believe in the oneness of God is to believe that He alone

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the Lord of the universe, He is omnipresent, omniscient and the sustainer of universe and mankind. You can only become Muslim by reciting this first Kalimah, which means purity that says, "There is none worthy of worship except God and Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is His messenger."

It is an important metaphysical concept that answers the riddles of this universe. It's defined as a dynamic belief that all men are the creatures of one God and they are equal. In Quran (1:5), Allah says, "You alone we worship, you alone we ask for help."

This faith saves Muslims from the evils of the world and blind following.

PROPHETHOOD;

The second part of first kalima, on the other hand signifies that God hasn't left men without any guidance for the conduct of his life. The latter part of the kalimah signifies the finality of Prophethood and the importance of believing in it.

As the second part of first kalimah says, "— and Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is the messenger of Allah."

Guidance is revealed through Prophets as they translate it into practice in their own lives and in society they wish to reform.

Allah in Quran (8:28) says, "Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is the best role

model for you - "

① BELIEF IN AFTERLIFE:

One of the main distinctive characteristics of Islam is to believe in life after death. In Islam, the concept of life hereafter is a fundamental belief which means that this world is temporary place of trials and whatever a man does here would be judged on the final day of judgment. On that day, men will be rewarded or punished for his deeds and misdeeds.

As Quran (17:13) mentions,

" --- and [for] every person We have imposed his fate upon his neck, and We will produce for him on the Day of Resurrection a record which he will encounter spread open. "

④ A COMPLETE WAY OF LIFE;

Islam is a complete way of life catering for all the fields of human existence. It is a complete religion because it guides humans in collective spheres, political, juridic and cultural aspects of one's life. It provides guidance for all walks of life. as it aims to purify soul and reform the reconstruction of life. In Quran Allah says,

" --- verily Islam is perfect deen for you. "

⑤ BALANCE BETWEEN INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM;

Islam is a perfect religion which balances individual and collective life. It not only focuses on individual but lead toward a collective where every individual can live in peace and harmony, love and brotherhood required to live a civilized life. It doesn't discriminate any person in form of colour, creed, gender and ethnicity.

Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) in his last sermon said, "All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a Black nor a Black has any superiority over a white except by piety and good action -"

⑥ UNIVERSALITY;

Islam addresses itself to the conscience of humanity and remove the confines of race, status and wealth. It encompasses the whole idea of mankind and humanity.

It's a universal religion as it's teachings are applicable for everyone regardless of any ethnicity or race. In Quran (21:107), it is mentioned that, "We have sent you only blessing for all mankind." This reflects that the teachings of Allah conveyed through Prophet (P.B.U.H) are for everyone.

⑦ SIMPLICITY AND RATIONALITY;

Islam is a religion without any mythology as its teachings are simple. All the teachings of Islam are simple and straightforward. Every compulsion and sunnah in Islam have social and spiritual meaning. As Allah says, "Establish namaz because it prevents you from evil."

⑧ IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE;

Islam motivates men to follow reason and use his intellect. Quran advised mankind to seek knowledge as it says, "O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge -" It asserts that those who have no knowledge are not equal to those who have. Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) said, "To seek knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim -"

⑨ COMPLETE RECORD OF TEACHINGS PRESERVED;

Teachings of Islam have been preserved in their original form. It is a universal religion because no changes have been made from its day of revelation till the final day of judgment. Quran is the book of Allah which has been in its truest form from last 14 hundred years. As it's mentioned in Surah Al-Hijra (9th ver) "Verily, we ourself has sent down the reminder (the Quran) and verily we ourself will be its guardian -"

This emphasizes that the teachings encapsulated

within Quran are authentic and a final source of guidance for all mankind.

① ISLAM PROMOTES HUMANITY;

Islam emphasizes on equality of all people. As Quran in (49:13) mentions, 'humanity descends from a single pair (Adam and Eve) and emphasizes judging people based on piety (goodness) rather than race, social status or ethnicity. Islam has given rights to every living organism on earth which also includes animals and plants. It believes in treating everyone with compassion and respect. Islamic practices like Zakaat promotes social welfare by helping the ones in need.

② ISLAM PROMOTES CHARACTER BUILDING;

Islam is a perfect religion which believes in strengthening ones character on the basis of the teachings of Allah laid by Prophets. As it also focuses on individual life, it molds one's character that is in accordance with the principles of Islam. In Quran (49:1-5) Allah says, "The believers are but one brotherhood, so make peace between you brothers. and be mindful of Allah so you maybe shown mercy." Moreover, Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) says, "The best of you are those with the best character."

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CONCLUSION;

The above mentioned features emphasizes Islam is a complete code of life which guides one through every aspect of life. Islam cannot be compared with any other religion because it's a complete religion which is relevant and authentic till today even if it was revealed centuries ago.