

What is Islam? Elaborate the salient features of Islam.

Introduction:

Islam is the religion which brings peace to mankind when man surrenders himself willingly to Allah according to the Holy Book revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Contextual Meaning:

Islam is an Arabic word. The literary meaning is 'submission' or 'peace.'

In religious context, it means 'willful submission to Allah'.

Islam as a code of life:

There have been and are many religions in the world but Islam is such a diversified religion which guides humanity about every aspect of life.

In other words, we can say that Islam is complete code of life.

Basic Concept of Islam:

The basic concept of Islam is based on "Tauheed" (Oneness of God) and the belief that Muhammad (PBUH) is the last prophet sent by Allah Almighty as a messenger to guide and teach the mankind to the right path.

The belief of 'Tauheed' is the revolutionary concept and constitutes the essence of the teachings of Islam. It means that there is only One Sustainer and One Supreme Lord of the Universe.

Truly Allah said,

"O, mankind worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, so that you may ward off evil. Who has appointed the earth a resting place for you, the

sky a canopy? and who causes water to pour down from the heavens, thereby producing fruits as food for you? So do not setup rivals to Allah, when you know better."

Salient features of Islam

Following are the salient features of Islam:-

(i) Simplicity:-

Islam as a religion is simple as it is free from Superstitions and irrational beliefs. The unity of God, the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) and the concept of life after death are the basic articles of this faith. All the teachings of Islam follow from these three articles and are based on sound logic and reasons.

(ii) Rationalism:-

Islam enjoins man to see things in the light of reality. It

teaches man to use his intellect and observe as well understand the real meanings of the presence of the things around him. The Prophet (PBUH) said,

"He who leaves his home in the search of some knowledge walks in the path of God."

No other religion went ever so far in asserting the dominance of reason and, of learning above all other manifestations of life. It is the religion that teaches rational approach towards life.

(iii) Practicality :-

Islam, as a religion is not based on empty or futile theories. In fact it intensely indicates in attaining a practical approach towards one's existence both as an individual and as a social being. The Prophet (PBUH) said,

"God does not accept belief, if it is not expressed in deeds, and

does not accept deeds, if they do not conform to belief."

It can be said that, Islam leads man towards a consciousness of moral responsibility by his adoption of practicality in his life.

(iv) Unity Between Matters and Spirits:-

One of the unique characteristics of Islam is that it does not divide life in water-tight compartments of matter and spirit. It is against asceticism and believes in the (advancement) achievement of spiritual elevation by living piously in this world with a complete sense of virtue and morality instead of renouncing the world. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said,

A Muslim who lives in the midst of the society and bears with patience and afflictions that come to him is better than the one who shuns society

and cannot bear any wrong done to him."

An establishment of a equilibrium is strongly desired by the religion of Islam between both the material and spiritual aspects of life.

(v) Moral Values :-

Islam teaches individuals to strive for righteousness and more excellence in all aspects of life. The five pillars of Islam provide a framework for moral development and spiritual growth. Describing the Prophet (PBUH):

"And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

(Al-Auran)

Islam emphasizes the importance of pure intentions, encouraging individuals to act with sincerity and moral integrity.

(vi) Concept of Accountability :-

The concept of the Day of Judgement, where individuals will be accountable for their deeds, motivates Muslims

to lead a virtuous life. Islam encourages individuals to develop a strong conscience, enabling them to recognize right from wrong and hold themselves accountable. As in Quran Allah

Almighty said,

"And every soul will be fully compensated for its deeds, and He is the most swift in reckoning."

(Quran 14:51)

(vii) Equal Justice :-

Islam provides the equality of justice by teaching the rights of men and women ^{of the society,} including non-Muslims.

All are equal in the eye of Allah, and they should have equal rights and opportunities. In the regard of justice no one is superior to the other, all should be treated equally under the law. This can be vividly explain by the Prophet's (PBUH) Hadith :-

"Whoever is appointed to a position of authority and is given the power to rule, but does not rule with justice, will not smell the fragrance of Paradise." (Bukhari)

(viii) Human Dignity:-

Islam ensures the dignity of a common man. According to Islam humans are created in the image of Allah, giving them inherent dignity and worth.

"We have certainly honored the children of Adam."

(~ Quran 17:70~)

Islam prohibits exploitation, oppression, and injustice, promoting fair treatment and protection that leads to the protection of dignity of every man.

Islam promotes self-esteem, self-worth and self-confidence. In the last sermon, Prophet (PBUH) said,

There is no superiority of Arab over a non-Arab, or a non-Arab over an Arab, except by righteousness.