

## HASSAN ABBAS

Q What is Islam: elaborate salient features of Islam.

MEANING

**ISLAM:-** Human beings have tendencies to judge everything by its surface this includes their approach towards religion generally and Islam specifically. People from West look at all religions as cause of violence in the world and treat Islam as the same.

They compare it to Judaism and Christianity. This is injustice to all these religion but most specifically in justice with Islam which has no equal.

From its meanings to its theological and philosophical roots Islam is different from all the religions that predate it. It not only talks about a persons relationship with his/her creator but also with what surrounds it. Be it animate or inanimate object.

**Meaning of ISLAM:-** To understand what is Islam we need to look at the essence of the word itself and its different meanings. This might sound too simple of a way to explain a 1400 year old religion which is also fastest growing one but this is also a unique characteristic of Islam that it is equally comprehensible for layman of simpliton as it is more complex for those with scholistic frame of mind. Islam is for everyone so there are all types of approaches to explain it.

**LITERAL MEANING:-** Islam is derived from alphabets 'S', 'L' and 'M' these they are roots and every word that emerges from these roots carry meaning of peace. There are also perspectives that support the ~~assert~~ assertion that Islam means to surrender or to submit.

**CONTEXTUAL MEANING:-** From all these literal meanings we can conclude that there are two possible contextual meanings of Islam.

- 1) To submit to the will of Allah to attain peace or
- 2) To submit ones desires to the will of Allah to attain peace.

Either way this means that Islam is a religion whose ultimate gift to its follower is peace of heart and soul in this world and in the After world.

**SHARIA MEANING:-** Separate from literal and contextual meanings of the words. How does the scripture of this religion, its founder and its scholars define it?

We will find numerous explanation in its theological texts. However, we will discuss few here.

A simple definition in light of Sharia can be that Islam is voluntarily submitting one self and his/her desires to the will of Allah to attain peace in material and eternal life.

Islamic theologian Dr. defines Islam as monotheistic religion that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). This definition restricts puts restriction that like other monotheistic religion Islam believe that there is one God. However, Islam is the only religion that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) of Hijaz.

In Hadees-e-Tibrael (A.S) the Prophet (P.B.U.H) himself defines Islam as combination of two things. One is to bear witness to Allah and his messenger and the ~~off~~ other is to practice the pillars of Islam. This means to enter Islam not only do you need to accept certain ideas of the path but one also how to practice it.

Imam Ghazali summarized this by explaining that Islam is the combination of two things. The rights of Allah and the rights of the people.

On the other hand Allama Saadudin Iskhani define Islam as combination of beliefs and worship.

All these definitions have reoccurring themes to believe in Allah and his messenger, to practice what is ~~order~~ advised and fulfill rights.

**DISTINCT FEATURES:-** Islam which preaches that there is one God like other Abrahamic religions. However, there are many distinct features in this religion which makes it different. If it were the same then there was no reason for Allah to reveal it but we know this with utmost confidence that Allah does not do anything which is useless.

1) **Tawheed:-** Islam introduced a unique concept of monotheism. As stated in Surah Ikhlas, Allah is one, He depends on no one, and he was neither born nor does he bear children.

Islam taught its followers that Allah is omnipresent and omnipotent, He is sustainer of everything. Nothing in this world is its equal. He is ineffable and eternal. We know him with different names which he himself revealed to us like "Raheem" and "Rehman" that tell us about his characteristics. But we cannot truly comprehend these characteristics because we are limited by standards of this physical and material world which is imperfect and impure, while all is pure and perfect.

(2) **QURAN:-** Allah revealed his books to his previous prophets like e.g. Torah and Bible. But with time the contents of these books were corrupted by those who had personal and political ambitions. Because of this people who followed those religions deviated from the true path. However, Quran is word of Allah. It is living a living miracle because not a single word

has been altered since it was revealed.

"We have brought down this message (Quran) and we will safe guard it" (Al Hijr)

Allah himself guaranteed in his book that its responsibility to protect his book. Even western critics of Islam like William Muir accepted uncruppted status of Quran. In his book The Life of Muhammad

"We may, with strongest of presumption, affirm that every verse is genuine and unaltered composition of Prophet (P.B.U.H) himself".

William Muir did not believe Quran to be the true word of God. Still he accepted that the text is in its original form. Therefore, Quran it self makes Islam unique from other faiths.

3) **COMPLETED RELIGION:-** Islam is the last religion and it ends the line of prophets that kept of appearing to guide humanity to light.

Before Islam there were centuries where primitive and unsophisticated human beings existed. They were limited to specific geographies and ethnicities. They seldom traded goods and even more rare were were cultural or ideological exchanges. Therefore, intial religions were rudimentary and did not educate about everything.

However, at the time of advent of Islam trade and communication routes had established and human beings had evolved enough to comprehend

the ultimate message that not only carried forward the previous teachings of Allah in its true form but also filled the blanks that were empty before. And now this message could travel from one corner of the world to the other giving opportunity to everyone to start walking on the right path. As stated in Quran.

"Today I have perfected your religion for you and completed my bounty upon you and chosen the religion (Islam) for you"

Therefore this is complete and final religion.

**Makamut:** The prophet (P.B.U.H) is the last messenger of Allah that has been sent to convey his final message. As described in Surah Najm of Quran Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is the "Seal of Prophet". Unlike previous religions Allah has made it clear the Muhammad (P.B.U.H) is role made for entire humanity be it matter of individual life, collective life or international relation. He is the teacher of entire humanity and has provided practical application of Islam through Sunnah.

"No doubt, in Prophet (P.B.U.H) you will find perfect model to follow"  
(Al: Ahzab)

**3 DIRECT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD:-** Islam welcomes its followers to establish a direct relationship with his creator. Islam does not teach its followers to believe in intercession. On the contrary it describes it as useless and unnecessary.

"The intercession of their intercessors will not benefit them"  
(Surah al-Mudawir)

Then Aayin in Surah Baqara Allah touches this top warning the readers to protect themselves from the time when no soul will suffice for another, no compensation of theirs will be accepted, nor will intercession help them.

**4 PIN OF MODERATION:-** Neither is Islam strict like judaism nor does it take cursins lightly like christianity. Islam teaches its followers to live a life of moderation. In its perspective no extreme exists.

"Those of you who when spend are neither extravagant nor stingy, but find medium between these two"  
(Surah Al Furqan)

Then when it comes to sanctity of life Quran compares an unjust murder, murder of entire humanity

"Unjust murder of one humanbeing is the murder of entire humanity."

The Prophet (P.B.U.H) himself criticized those who exhibited too much strictness.

"Ruined are those who insist on hardships in matter of faith"  
(Sahih muslim)

## 5 Political and

⇒ **POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM:-** Unlike other religion that limit religion to private life Islam teaches that public life is very much part of the religion. It gives proper political and economic systems so that when implemented Muslims can live according to the ways of Islam without state hindrance.

Islam has given the "Khilafat" system of governance where a Muslim ruler governs under the complete sovereignty of Allah. He himself must follow those guidelines. The Khalifa is chosen by consultation. It is the way Allah has divised to chose a leader. In Surah Shura He addresses that consultation in affairs is encouraged way to reach a conclusion in matter of state.

Allah has also provided a robust economic and social welfare system. Islam has forbidden interest payments on loans and established the system of zakat to help the poor and needy.

6 **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:-** As written in detail earlier Islam is not just limited to rights of our character but it gives rights to other living beings, environment and also sets out obligations.

### 6.1:- RIGHTS

a) **WOMEN:-** Before Islam women were not treated justly. People would bury their daughters or would not give them rights in property. Islam changed this cruel thinking towards women. Islam also encouraged women to get educated.

Prophet (P.B.U.H) once said

\* Acquiring education is obligatory on every believer (man and women)

b) **ANIMALS:-** Prophet (P.B.U.H) always stressed the believers of Islam to be kind with animals. He once reprimanded a person for keeping his camel thirsty. While in another instance he ~~at~~ announced a woman had been condemned to hell for starving to death a cat.

c) **PLANTS AND ENVIRONMENT:-** Prophet (P.B.U.H) instructed Muslims not to cut trees even when in state of war. He (P.B.U.H) also instructed his followers not to waste water ~~water~~ even when sitting near a running stream.

6.2) **RESPONSIBILITIES:-** Islam has bestowed many responsibilities when it comes to people. In no religion does the followers have responsibility towards ~~Parents~~ parents, siblings, spouses, neighbours, relatives, orphans etc.

Islam emphasizes its followers of taking care of the needy and implemented the system of Zakat. It is the only worship that it has allowed ~~for~~ the state to impose. In Quran Allah has repeatedly instructed believers to pray Namaz and participate in Zakat.

Islam has also instructed its followers to make sure not to discriminate on the basis of caste and race. In his Farewell sermon the Prophet (P.B.U.H) said

"Neither white is superior to black, nor black is superior to white. The basis of superiority is piety"

**CONCLUSION:-** Being the last and complete religion, Islam is not limited by geography, race or time. It is permanent and will last till the end of times. It gives complete code of life for its followers to follow. Therefore, all these attributes, missing from other religions, make Islam distinct and unique.