

Q.

What is Islam? Elaborate salient features of Islam.

1.

INTRODUCTION

Humans, since inception, sought metaphysical beings or deities to answer the questions unexplainable to him. He created his own dogmas - namely religion - out of what was revealed by his God. Humans misused religion, for example, to fear people and shed blood for the obedience of the masses. It was not until seventh century that humans started accepting others' perspectives and come over religious differences voluntarily. This happened as, the universal code of life, Islam had arrived. Revealed upon the most beloved prophet, Muhammad (SAW), the religion became universal, addressing the problems of all humans. Islam hence, become unique from every perspective as it not only addressed Man-to-God relation but also Man-to-Man relation. As ⁱⁿ Surah Ibrahim Allah says, "...We have revealed to you that you may bring forth men by their Lord's permission from utter darkness into light." (Al-Quran). The concept of Tauheed, plurality of the prophethood and dual accountability are some of its salient features, making Islam a distinguished and ubiquitous religion of the world.

2. ISLAM - PARADIGM OF ALL RELIGIONS

2.1 LITERAL AND CONTEXTUAL MEANING:

The literal meaning of Islam is 'to submit to the will of God'. While, its contextual meaning is 'to find one's roots or to find a way of life'.

2.2 DEFINITION:

Islam is the complete code of life, providing one with a blueprint of how to spend an ideal life - bounded by the will of Allah. To believe in the unity of God, Prophethood, Revelations, Angel, and final day of judgement complement Islam.

المؤمنون ﴿۱﴾ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَرَسُولِهِ (البقرة)

"All believe in Allah and His messenger and His Angels and His Books and His Messengers."
- Al Quran (Al-Baqrah)

2.3 SIGNIFICANCE:

Islam spread because of its simplicity and rationality. It is the only religion that opt use of force as the last resort. Islam signify humankind as the supreme creation of Allah. Further, the purpose of life and this world are given in the Quran. Lastly, Islam deals not only with rituals but also with the collective life, giving one a complete code of life.

Islam

Man-to-God

Individual Issues

Rituals

Purpose of universe

Blueprint for life

Man-to-Man

Societal Issues

Political Issues

Economic Issues

Dual accountability

Deen

3. SILENT FEATURES OF ISLAM

i) TAUHID:

It is the first pillar as well as article of faith. For a believer to remain under the umbrella of Islam, Tauheed is a vital belief. The concept of Tauheed in Islam differs from every other religion as Allah says in the Quran, the contextual meaning of which is, "He does not have any children or partners... He is alone from eternity..."

ii) FINALITY OF PROPHETHOOD

With the concept of Tauheed, the finality of prophethood goes hand in glove or side by side. As surah Al-Ahzab says, "Muhammad has no successor among you, but verily, he is the Apostle of God and last in the line of Prophets." - Al-Quran. This portrays that Muhammad (SAW) was the seal of the prophets.

iii) PRESERVANCE OF QURAN:

Unlike other revealed book e.g. Taurat, Zabur, Injeel, Quran is unchanged for 1450 years and will remain the same till hereafter. This is because Allah, Himself has taken its responsibility so that humans can have a word of Allah by the end of this world. Hence, Quran is a miracle of Allah, making Islam distinctive.

iv) DUEL ACCOUNTABILITY:

Islam is a religion where Allah guides His people to spend life in a balanced manner. A Muslim is accountable for his deeds and intentions in this world as well as in the hereafter. Quran also speaks on it, the contextual meaning is, "and do you really think that we have made you in vain and that you will not return back to me..".

v) PURPOSE OF LIFE:

Islam provides purpose of life to humans. A person should submit himself to the will of Allah that whatever he does should be in-line with the guidance of Allah. For example, Allah advises in Quran that no one should be hurt by the end of a believer. Islam also guides one to spend his life on the path of righteousness where he forbid evil and embrace Allah's will e.g. seek Allah's help and be patient rather than being despaired.

vi) UNIVERSALITY OF QURAN: AND ~~SO~~

Unlike other religions, Islam is a religion for humanity. It did not come for Arabs or Muslims alone but for humanity in general. Above it, the words of Quran are unchanged and will remain so. Quran deals with problems of humans through its universal guidance that is not bound to one region, ethnicity or culture.

vii) SPRITUALITY AND RATIONALITY:

Before Islam, rationalism was considered an out-of-the-religion phenomenon. But, Islam supports rationality along with spirituality. For example, Al-Quran speaks about the arrival of 'Iron' on Earth through an asteroid from space - later science discovered it too. So, Islam is the only religion where rituals align with factual information e.g. societal or political system of Muslims.

viii) COMPLETE CODE OF LIFE:

Islam provides humans with the laws of nature, obligations to follow, limitations to stay in and reward in the end. It provides one with individual satisfaction as well as collective satisfaction. For example, when a person controls his despair and stay patient, he found satisfaction with Allah; on the other hand, Islam also guides to stay humble with the people around you hence, promoting a cooperative society.

ix) TOLERANCE OVER FORCE:

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had always kept the option of war at the last. Islam spreads not on the blade but over its tolerance - live and let live - and simplicity. Even Prophet (SAW) once said this, "If Islam is spread over the edge of sword then what would be the religion of swordsmith..". That is why, Islam forbids forced conversion and mistreatment of non-Muslims.

x) DEFENDER OF HUMANITY:

Islam provides dignity to a human through rights, it also promises to safeguard them - which is the purpose of any Islamic state. Once prophet (SAW) said to a monk of Madina that he will protect him from any enemy as long as he is in the boundaries of Madina. This depicts that Islam is above selected people but for all.

xi) UNIVERSALITY OF MUHAMMAD (SAW):

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is an ideal for all of this world as he depicts humans an ideal life. He taught humanity to be patient even in the times of abysmal, for example, his visit to Taif was not as he (SAW) expected. Likewise, he (SAW) taught humanity to forgo mere emotional rage and live life on principles, for example,

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he (SAW) forgave everyone at the time of conquest of Makkah except a few although he had the power to destroy them. So, these examples depict how one should bend his way out of issues, control emotions and believe in Allah in every situation.

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xii)

ISLAM IS DYNAMIC:

Islam stood alone from every other religion of the world as it is not rigid but flexible. The laws and rules or obligations in Islam are dynamic in nature - they are adaptable to new times and situations. For this reason, the concept of Ijma, Ijtihad and Qiyas are given. Declaring cocaine, meth and recent drugs as haram is done on the basis of Qiyas - by resembling their impact with wine - hence, it's an example of ~~dynamic~~ dynamic nature of Islam.

4.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, Islam is the religion that guides humans to bow down in front of no one but Allah, seek help from no one but Allah and believe in the absoluteness of no one but Him. Islam deals with individual as well as collective problems of a human. It gives meaning to one's life, draft a blueprint for ideal life, held one accountable for his deeds, provide rationality with spirituality and gives universality of Quran to the humankind. These silent features make Islam not only unique but also distinctive as it deals from grassroots issues to societal or even global issues. It is a complete code of life for anyone with the believe of Allah in his heart.