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ZMS ID: 33249

Dated: 31/01/2024

Assignment #1

ISLAMIC STUDIES

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Q. What is Islam? Elaborate the salient features of Islam.

Ans. Introduction:

The word 'Islam' means submission and peace: submission to the moral imperatives of the one and only God, and peace with His creatures. On the vertical level (God-to-Man relationship) ~~the~~ Islam means submission. On the horizontal level (Man-to-Man relationship) Islam means peace. The true love of God and submission to His commands is the guarantor of peace and harmony among His creatures. In its purest sense, Islam is nothing but the act of devoutly loving God and being just and benevolent to His creatures.

The Quran refers to Islam as 'the paths of peace', "Subul al-Salam" (Al-Maidah 5:16)

Literal Meaning of Islam:

The word "Islam" has been derived from the root of an Arabic word SLM (سلم), which means 'to surrender', 'to submit', and 'to give one's self up'.

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i. Imam Rughib Al-Isfahani (d. 1108) in his Al-Mufradat fi Gharaib Al-Quran says:

"Islam, in law, is of two kinds: one is a simple confession with the tongue... the other is that along with confession, there is belief in the heart and a fulfillment in practice, and resignation to God in whatever He brings to pass or decrees".

The Imam Rughib further says: "Islam means entering into salam, and salam and silm both signify peace."

ii. Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928) in his book "The Spirit of Islam" defines Islam as:

"Salam (salaam), in its primary sense, means, to be tranquil, at rest, to be at perfect peace; in its secondary sense, to surrender oneself to Him with whom peace is made."

Contextual Meaning of Islam:

Islam's contextual meaning is "to enter in peace by submitting to the will of Allah", and/or "submission of desires to the will of Allah."

According to Fiqh, Islam means "to enter in peace by voluntarily submitting to the will of Allah."

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In Surah Al-Baqarah (2:256), Allah says,

(translation:

"Let there be no compulsion in religion."

In Surah Al-Kafirun (109:6), Allah says,

(translation:

"You have your way, and I have my way."

Islamic Definitions According to Different Scholars:

i) According to Imam Ghazali:

"Islam is an amalgamation of the rights of Allah and rights of mankind."

ii) According to Dr. Hamidullah (Author):

"Islam is a monotheistic din, revealed on Holy Prophet (PBUH)."

iii) According to Maulana Sadar Uddin Islahi:

"Islam is the combination of two things: Faiths and worship."

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SALIENT FEATURES OF ISLAM:

1) Tawhid:

Tawhid is a revolutionary concept and constitutes the essence of the teachings of Islam. It means that there is only one supreme Lord of the universe. He is omnipotent, omnipresent, and the sustainer of the world and of mankind.

Tawhid is the first part of our Kalimah. All our worships, beliefs, faith on prophet-hood, rituals, code of life etc. are based on and derived from our faith on Allah (Tawhid).

Relevance in Quran:

Translation: (112:1)

"Say, He is Allah - One and Indivisible."

Relevance in Ahadith:

Translation:

"Tawhid is the first chapter of Islamic Syllabus."

"Islam is built on five pillars: belief that Allah is One, establishing regular prayer, paying zakah, fasting in Ramadan, and Hajj."

- (Sahih Muslim)

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2) Prophethood:

The second part of the Kalimah signifies that Allah has revealed His guidance to His mankind through His prophets, and Muhammad was the last prophet. So, the second basic postulate of Islam is to believe in the prophethood of Muhammad, to accept the religion he presented, and to follow his commands and example.

Al-Quran (33:40):

"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but is the Messenger of Allah"

3) Revealed Ideology:

Islam is a divinely revealed ideology revealed on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the last Messenger of Allah. Holy Quran says:

"Certainly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves" (Al-Imraan 3:164)

4) Simplicity, Rationality and Practicality:

Islam is a religion without any superstitious and irrational beliefs. Its teachings are simple, based on reason, and sound logic. Islam awakens in man the faculty of reason and exhorts him to use his intellect. Allah says in Holy Quran:

"Say: Are those who know and those who do not know alike?" (Az-Zumar 39:9)

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Holy Prophet said:

"He who leaves his home in search of knowledge walks in the path of God." (Tirmidhi & Darimi)

"To seek knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim." (Ibn Majah & Bayhaqi).

5) Unity of Matter and Spirit:

A unique feature of

Islam is that it does not divide life into water-light compartments of matter and spirit. Islam does not believe in asceticism. It does not ask man to avoid material things. It holds that spiritual elevation is to be achieved by living piously in the rough and tumble of life, not by renouncing the world. The Quran advises us to pray as follows:

(Al-Baqarah 2:202), Translation:

"Our Lord! Give us something fine in this world as well as something fine in the Hereafter."

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"A Muslim who lives in the midst of society and bears with patience the afflictions that come to him is better than the one who shuns society and cannot bear any wrong done to him."

6) Complete Way of Life:

Islam ~~gives~~ provides guidance for all aspects of life - individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and

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cultural, and national and international. Allah says in Holy Quran:

"We have sent our messengers with explanations, and sent the book and the balance down with them, so that mankind may conduct themselves with all fairness...." (57: 25)

7) Balance between Individual and Society:

Another unique feature of Islam is that it establishes a balance between individualism and collectivism. It believes in the individual personality of man and holds everyone personally accountable to God.

(Al-Najm, 53: 39):

"And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for. And that his striving shall soon be seen. Then shall be rewarded for it with the fullest reward...."

"On the other hand, Islam also awakens a sense of social responsibility in man. Everyone, for instance is enjoined to pay zakat.

8) Universality and Humanism:

The message of Islam is for the whole of human race. God, in Islam, is the God of all the world (Quran 1:1) and the Prophet is a Messenger for whole of mankind.

"O People! I am but a Messenger from God to you all." (Al-Araaf 7: 158)

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9) Permanence and Change:

The Quran and Sunnah contain eternal guidance. This guidance comes from God, who is free from the limitations of space and time. But God has revealed only broad principles and has endowed man with the freedom to apply them in every age in the way suited to the spirit and conditions of that age. That is why Islam always remains as fresh and modern as tomorrow's morning.

10) Islam Promotes Humanity:

The concept of character building, charity (Zakat), fulfilling the rights of mankind, brotherhood, etc. all reflect the significance and respect given to humanity in Islam.

Dr. Wasiullah M. Abbas, in his book, Key Features of Islam, says, "One of the key features of Islam is the practice of social services."

11) Complete Record of Teachings Preserved:

To date the teachings of Quran and the Prophet are preserved in their original form. No single change has ever been made in these records. As Allah (SWT) says in Quran:

"It is certainly We who have revealed the Reminder, and it is certainly We who will preserve it." (Al-Hijr, 25: 9)

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12) Life after Death:

The world, according to Islam, is a place of trial, and man is being judged in it. After his death, he will be resurrected in a new world where he shall be rewarded or punished in accordance with his deeds.

"And on the Day of Judgement We will bring forth to each person a record which they will find laid open. And it will be said, 'Read your record. You 'alone' are sufficient this day to take account of yourself.'"

17:13-14
(Al-Isra ~~17:13-14~~)

CONCLUSION:

Islam means peace and submission. The unique features of Islam establish it as the religion for all, and the religion of today and tomorrow.