

Assignment 1

Q. What is Islam? Elaborate the salient features of Islam (15 marks).

Islam is an Arabic term derived from the three-letter Arabic root: S, L, M. It literally means peace, surrender, submission and commitment. Contextually, it means to enter in peace by submitting to the will of Allah. It is the submission of desires to the will of Allah, essentially, 'the voluntary submission.' The term 'voluntary' is added because Allah ﷻ says in the Quran 'let there be no compulsion in religion' (2:256).

Dr. Hammedullah said that Islam is a monotheist ~~religion~~ revealed upon the prophet. The old name of Islam was 'Deen-e-Hanef' which also means monotheist, that is, believe in one god. One submits to the will of Allah ~~by~~ through Shahadah: 'There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.' To believe in the oneness of Allah and the finality of Prophethood is a significant part of ~~submitting~~ submitting to the will of Allah.

Islam is a universal din which guides in every aspect of life. It is not for a limited time, in fact it is a din for eternity. It is not confined to a limited geography or for a specific ethnicity ~~or this or that~~. As Allah says in the Quran 'whoever takes a life, it will be as if they have killed all of humanity, and whoever saves a life, it will be as if they saved all of humanity.'

The most important salient feature of Islam is the unique concept of Tawheed (Oneness of Allah). This reiterates the definition of Islam as a monotheist religion. Allah has no partners, associates or offsprings. Associating partners with Allah is one of the griciest sins and is said to commit Shirk. As discussed earlier, Shahadah ~~is~~ is self-explanatory in terms of the unique concept of Tawheed. Allah also says in the Quran: 'Say: He is Allah, the One' (112:1) and 'Allah is He on whom all depend' (112:2). Allah alone is the provider and sustainer. He is the creator of ~~all things~~ mankind and has power over all. 'And Allah brought you out of the wombs of your mother while you knew nothing, and gave you hearing, sight and intellect so ~~perp~~ perhaps you would be thankful.' (16:78) He created us from a clot of blood and ~~is~~ is thus worthy of all praises. Sirat un Nabi by Allama Shibli Nomani mentions that Tawheed is the first chapter of the Islamic syllabus. Added to that, it says that Islam is like a fort and the gate of that fort is Tawheed.

The second most important salient feature of Islam is Prophethood. Its significance can be seen by the fact that this feature is the second part of the Shahadah: 'and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.' Allah says in the Quran regarding the finality of ~~the~~ prophethood that 'Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but is the messenger of Allah and the seal of prophets' (33:40). The Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) give us a complete guide on the way of life. For instance, Allah has mentioned namaz 70 times in the Quran

but there is no mention on how to pray. Thus, through the Sunnah of the Prophet, we learn the way to perform namaz. Another example is that it is said that taking interest is forbidden. Therefore, the prophet established a government in which there was strictly no use of interest. ~~The prophet~~ The Prophet is a perfect example for the Muslim Ummah to follow. At one instance, the Prophet (saw) himself said: 'Verily, I have been sent as a teacher to mankind.'²

Another salient feature of Islam is that it is a complete code of life. This is rightly said ^{so} because Islam guides us in every aspect of life. The Quran says: 'We have revealed to you the Book as an explanation of all things, a guide, a mercy and good news for those who submit.' (16:89) - There is guidance on complete individual life, be it birth, upbringing of children, character building, education, income or family. It ~~has~~ ^{also} provides teachings on all ~~matters~~ collective life matters for example neighbour rights, political system, justice, global affairs, etc. Allah says in the Quran, 'Surely, this Quran guides to what is most the upright.' (17:9)

The last salient feature of Islam is that it promotes humanity by encouraging characterfulness, placing emphasis on charity, providing medical services as well as services to mankind, defining human rights as well as animal rights and advocating for environmental protection.

11

The prophet (SAW) said 'Whoever adopts the believer who show the most perfect faith are those who have the best character.' Allah loves people who are patient, forgiving, kind, compassionate and honest. The Prophet (SAW) is the perfect example of characterful and as Muslims, we all look upto him. The Prophet (SAW) said, 'Whoever adopts humility for the sake of Allah, would be raised in status by Him.' Allah says in the Quran, "Surely Allah does not like whoever is arrogant and boastful;" (4:36) and "Woe to every backbiter, slanderer." (104:1)

Being caring and compassionate for our fellow human beings is a central part of Islam and therefore Zakat (annual tax) has been made obligatory and is one of the five pillars of Islam. Charity promotes social welfare and looking after the well-being of the underprivileged segment of the society is an act that is encouraged in Islam and highly liked by Allah. The Quran says 'Rather the righteous are those who believe in Allah, the last day, the angels, the books and the prophets; who give out charity out of their cherished wealth to relatives, orphans, the poor, needy, travellers, beggars, and for freeing captives.' (2:177)

Another way in which Islam promotes humanity is through encouraging medical services and services to humanity. It is reported that Hazrat Asma (sister of Hazrat Ayesha RA) asked the Prophet if she could care for her mother who was still an infidel. The Prophet replied that caring for the ill is the most sacred thing to do. Allah also says in the Quran that whoever saves one

life, it is as if he has saved all of humanity. One should guard the life, honour and property of others as he would guard his own. A person's existence should not be troublesome to the society but should ensure peace and comfort. The Quran says 'Worship none but Allah; be kind to parents, relatives, orphans and the needy; speak kindly to people' (2:83). If Allah has blessed someone abundantly, it is his responsibility to spend it in the way of Allah. This is also a service to mankind.

Islam promotes humanity by defining human rights. In Allah's eyes, every human being is equal regardless of his race, colour or language. The Prophet also reiterated this in his sermon, '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 ~~and~~ nor does a black have any superiority over a white except by piety and good action.' To fulfill the rights of people is the responsibility of every Muslim. The Prophet also said in his final sermon that "Oh people it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women but they also have rights over you."

Furthermore, Islam talks about animal rights. The Prophet insisted on showing kindness to animals. Whenever he saw any animal overburdened or ill-fed, he would speak mildly to the owner and say 'Fear Allah in your treatment of animals.' ~~And~~ Being harsh or misusing ~~the~~ an animal or causing it pain is forbidden in Islam. Instead, treating animals with gentleness is encouraged. The Prophet said, 'A good deed done to an animal is as meritorious as a good deed done to a human being.'

10 PAPERWORK

Environment protection is also promoted in Islam. The Prophet said 'do not waste water, even if you are on a running river.' Water is a means of life and it provides us health in many ways hence being wasteful is disliked in Islam. The Prophet also said that planting a green tree is the best charity.

It is interesting to note the interconnectedness of all the salient features of Islam. These features reiterate the universal nature of Islam as a religion ~~and that~~ as it touches upon all arenas of life. Allah says in the Quran, 'Today I have completed your religion for you, perfected my favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.'