

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

- Islam is an Arabic word which means peace, submission and surrender. It contextually means to surrender to Allah's will and enter in peace. All this must be done voluntarily as Islam prohibits coercion in beliefs. The root word is 'SLM' which means peace. Therefore a muslim is one who resigns himself to Allah and professes the faith of Islam.

Islam has some salient features :- ① Concept of Tauheed = This is first part of Kalma and is core pillar of Islam. Tauheed is to believe in Oneness of Allah, His supremacy and exalted status. This concept also defines the true position of man in universe. Allah is the Creator and man is His vicegerent.

"Islam is like a fort and the gate of that fort is Tauheed" - by Allama Shibli Noman

② Prophethood = Its the second part of Kalma, according to prophet's decision. This concept is of believe in finality of prophethood. It means that Allah has not left man alone, without any guidance as he has revealed help through his prophets. This means believers must follow code of conduct that prophets were instructed to pass onto humanity. "We have not sent any messenger but that he was to be obeyed with Allah's permission" (4:64)

③ Complete code of life = Islam guides us in every aspect of life, whether its individual or collective. For example prayer in ear at birth (ind) or trade rules (collective) etc. It states roles and responsibilities of each individual, creating harmony and balance in society and in individual's life. Its an all embracing way of life and includes all fields (social, economic, financial, justice etc).

④ Islam promotes humanity => It promotes caring for humans i.e spouse, children, neighbours, parents, elderly etc and protect animals and environment as well. It instills spirit of humanity, being characterful, charitable and empathetic. It even denounces being wasteful of water, something which is 2/3 of the world. Prophet said "Donot waste a single drop of water even if you are sitting at a running stream".

⑤ Simplicity => Islam is a religion without any mythology. Its teachings are simple and intelligible. It is free from superstition and irrational beliefs. The concepts of unity of God, prophethood of Muhammad, and life after death are based on reason and sound logic. There are not complicated rituals,

No hierarchy of priests, no far-fetched abstractions (6) **Practicalism** - Islam urges man to use his intellect and see things in light of reality. It emphasizes need of being knowledgeable to be distinguished from others; that those who do not observe and understand are worse than cattle (7:179). It obliges muslim to seek knowledge. This is how people are brought of out superstition. (7) **Creates balance**

between Individual and Society. Islam has balance of individualism & collectivism. It holds people accountable to God, guarantees their rights, puts emphasis on personality development. On other hand, it awakens sense of social responsibility and enjoins them together in prayers and Zakat. It also emphasizes neighbour rights "He is not a believer who takes his fire while his neighbour starves" said Prophet

(8) **Universality** - Islam is for entire human race. God is god of all world and Prophet is messenger for all mankind. It is for every race, gender, culture, and language. It does not discriminate based on wealth, skin color, clan, blood or territory, as was prevalent before the advent of Muhammad (pbuh). Therefore Islam unites the entire human race under one banner. (9) **Balance of permanence and change**. The Quran and Sunnah give eternal guidance by Allah, which is permanent but their reapplication in modern times is done through Ijtihad, which means it changes a/c to time, need, circumstance etc. That is why Islam always remains as fresh and modern as tomorrow's morn.

(10) **Complete record of teachings preserved** = Teachings of Islam have been preserved in their original form and without alteration of any kind. Quran exists since last 1400 years that is unchanged. Even detailed accounts of Prophet's life are preserved, in words of Hadith and Sirah. Other religious books such as Christianity have been corrupted and altered with. Only Islam's teachings are in its original form.

These awesome unique features of Islam that establish its credentials as religion of today and tomorrow. These have appealed to masses in past and present and affirmed them that Islamic religion is truth and right path of mankind and this will continue to appeal them in the future. Each feature is immensely important and dives deep into why Islam is the ultimate truth.