

Q. What is Islam, enlist salient features of Islam.

## Islam :-

The word "Islam" means submission and peace. Submission to the moral imperative of the one and only God and peace with his creatures. On the vertical level (God to man relationship) it means submission. On the horizontal level (man to man relationship) it means peace. Imam Ghazali defines Islam as; "Filling rights of Allah and rights of people." The very first verse of Quran, "In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate," is an emblem of love, mercy and compassion. The same theme of love and mercy is continuously repeated throughout the Quran, as this verse is repeated in the Quran 114 times. Same way prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used to recite the following supplication after performing the obligatory prayers and a Muslim is recommended to do the same. It states; "Oh Allah, You are peace and from You emanates all peace, blessed are You, Oh Possessor of majesty and honour."

Moreover, Islam is an ideal system of living for all mankind which guides in every aspect of life and is not limited to a specific time, geography or ethnicity. According to Dr. Hameedullah, "Islam is the Monotheist Deen revealed through prophet Muhammad (PBUH)." A man can join the fold of Islam by testifying the unity of Allah and the prophethood of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH). Both of these beliefs

efs are epitomized in the Kalimah ; "There is no god except Allah, Muhammad (PBUH) is His prophet."

## Literal meaning of Islam :-

The word "Islam" has been derived from the root of an Arabic word SLM which means "peace", "to surrender", "to submit" and "to give one's self up." Thus, one who ~~enters~~ confess Islam, enters in "the peace" by submitting to the will of Allah. Imam Raghīb al - Isfahani in his book, Al - Mufradāt fi Gharaīb al - Qurān 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." Imam Raghīb further says ; "Islam means entering into Salam, and salam and silm both signify peace."

## Contextual meaning of Islam :-

Islam as a religion stands for complete submission and obedience to Allah. This signifies that one can achieve real peace of body and of mind only through submission and obedience to Allah. Such obedient way of life results in mental peace, stability in the life of individual and harmony in the society. This message was preached by all prophets of Allah, who guided mankind to the right path. The last of these apostles was prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who pr-

esented God's guidance in its final shape and for all times and climes. This guidance is called Islam whose principles and injunctions are laid down in the Quran and whose practices are preserved in the life example of the prophet (PBUH) called Sunnah. Confessing Islam does not take away individual freedom, it frees the mind from superstitions and fills it with truth and metaphysical reality. Allah created man for a fixed period of life to be lived on the earth as a trust and test. He has prescribed a divine code of life and granted freedom to follow this code or not. As Allah says in Quran; "Whosoever wants, he should believe; and whosoever wants, he should disbelieve." (18 : 29).

## Salient features of Islam :-

The salient features of Islam are enlisted as below.

1. Unique concept of Tawhid (Monotheism)
2. Finality of prophethood
3. Islam as a complete code of life
4. Islam promotes humanity
5. Protection of women rights
6. Protection of minority rights
7. Islam as a universal Deen
8. Concept of Punishments and the Day of Judgement

## ⇒ Unique concept of Tawhid :-

The doctrine of tawhid affirms the belief in absolute unity and oneness of a unique, omnipotent and

merciful God. Tauhid is the very essence of Islam which is epitomized in the first part of Kalima; "There is no god except Allah." Allah, the Arabic word for God is the highest focused word of the Quran which signifies that Allah is the Eternal creator and nothing is like him. He remains for ever, devoid of any resemblance, similarity, partnership and association. Nothing can stand equal or opposed to Him. He always remains the one who presides over the entire system of existence as its Master and creator. Everything other than Him is His creation. This is further indicated in the Holy Quran, as is said;

"God bears witness that there is no god but He."  
(3 : 18)

## ⇒ Finality of prophethood 8 -

This salient feature of Islam affirms the finality of prophethood and it is also second part of Kalima which means "Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is Allah's prophet." This belief bears as much importance as other convictions of faith, because without verbal acceptance and inner conviction of this, entering the fold of Islam is invalid. The prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the last Messenger of God, who was sent to all mankind. This is indicated in Quran;

"Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets and Allah is aware of all things."  
(33 : 40)

It was also announced by prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that ;

"I am the last prophet and there will be no prophet after me."

(Al-Hadith)

## ⇒ Islam as a complete code of life :-

Islam is a complete code of life for man's conduct in every field of activity. It not only lays down rules governing his relations with Allah but also gives instructions regarding his relations with his fellow beings. Islam focuses on training and education of individual. "Seeking knowledge is compulsory for all Muslim men and women." (al-Hadith). Islam also gives instructions regarding family life. It ensures the establishment of a family through marriage and considers it not only a physical necessity but also a religious duty. It therefore encourages marriages of young people; "Marriage of the women who seem good to you, two or three or four." (Al-Nisa 4:3).

Islam has also given detailed instructions to Muslims for good treatment of parents, as is said in the Holy Quran ;

And We have commanded man to be kind to both his parents. His mother bears him painfully and gives birth to him painfully (Al-Ahqaf - 46:15).

Islam has also enjoined fair treatment of relatives and neighbours. "And worship God and ascribe no partners to Him and show kindness to parents and neighbours." (Al-Nisa 4:36). Moreover, Islam

also guides about political, economic, administrative and judicial system with a complete sense.

## ⇒ Islam promotes humanity 8-

On his last pilgrimage to the House of Allah at Makkah, the Holy prophet Muhammad (PBUH) delivered his farewell sermon, which is considered the pre-eminent charter of Human rights in the history of mankind. Islam focuses on the character building of individuals, thus the Holy prophet (PBUH) said; "The perfect among you (the believers) are those who are best in character." Islam also guides about the welfare of mankind. "Key feature of Islam is practice of social services." (Dr. Wasiullah, Egypt). Dr. Ruth Pfau said, "provision of medical services is called humanity." The Holy Quran indicates this, as is said; "And whoever saves a life it is though he had saved the lives of all mankind" (Al-Maida 5:32).

According to a hadith, "Allah shows displeasure to that person who never visits sick person." The western world considers charity as humanity but Islam has given a perfect system of zakat (charity) about 1400 years ago. "Muslims are those who give wealth in spite of love of it." (Al-Baqarah 2:177) Islam also protects animal rights. Prophet (PBUH) reprimanded a person just because his camel was thirsty. Along with that, Islam promotes environmental protection. "Planting a green tree is the best charity", (Al-Hadith). Moreover, the last sermon ended racism and nationalism and guided about equality.

## ⇒ Protection of Women rights ☺ -

Islam has granted unprecedented spiritual, social, political, economic and cultural status to women. It has not only acknowledged the complete personhood of women but also safeguarded her rights keeping in view her vulnerabilities. According to Islam woman is a human being and she has a soul similar to that of man. Thus men and women are quite equal to each other. Islam gave her right to life, to honor and to property and dignity like men. According to the lesson of the Holy prophet (PBUH); "Fear Allah regarding women." Despite the social acceptance of female infanticide among some Arabian tribes, the Holy Quran forbade this custom and considered it a crime like any other murder;

"And When the female (infant) buried - is questioned for what crime she was killed."

(Al-Takweer 81: 8-9)

## > Islam protects minority rights ☺ -

The Islamic Shariah not only regulates relations of Muslims with Muslims, but also non Muslims in order to safeguard the rights of all irrespective of their creed and religion. Non Muslims in a Muslim state enjoy the rights of property, protection and can have their civil and criminal cases tried according to their religion and personal laws. The second Caliph of Islam, Hazrat Umar (R.A) arrived Palestine to conclude a pact called as

Umayyad covenant. It granted gaurantee of civil and religious liberty to christians in exchange of Jizya. According to the teachings of Islam a Muslim can neither torture a non Muslim nor can he insult him in any way. The Holy prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said ; "He who tortures a dhimmi is like the one who has contracted him (the prophet), I shall count-eract against him on the Day of Judgement who has wronged him."

## ⇒ Islam as a universal Deen 8-

Islam is not only a religion but also a Deen. Religion deals man's relations with God whereas Deen deals both with man's relations with God and his fellow beings. Religion deals with private affairs of life whereas Deen covers all aspects of life, individual as well as collective. In other words Deen is all embracing term which includes religio-socio-politico-economic system. It touches upon material as well as spiritual dimensions of human existence. Deen also covers sacred & secular aspects of man. These all features of Islam as a Deen makes it the fastest growing religion of the world.

"This day, I have perfected your Deen for you, completed my favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your Deen."  
(Al-Maidah 5:3)



## ⇒ Concept of punishments & the Day of Judgement in Islam :-

The punishments in Islam do not take away individual freedom but they prevent one from conducting crimes. These punishments include: Penalties enacted for manslaughter or serious bodily injuries.

Punishment for theft by the loss of a hand.  
Punishment for fornication and adultery: Stoning for a married person and one hundred lashes for an unmarried person.

Punishment for slander by eighty lashes.

These all punishments in Islam prevent crimes and make the society peaceful and prosperous.

Moreover, the concept of the day of Judgement and life Hereafter creates a sense of accountability and promotes justice, spirit of generosity, spirit of social work, cooperation and brotherhood and also gives purpose of life. The Holy Quran warns this, as is said;

"He who does an atom's weight of good shall see it and he who does an atom's weight of evil shall see it."

(Al-Zalzalah 99 : 7-8)

And prophet PBUH says ;

"You will have to die, like you sleep and you will have to get up as you awake."

# Conclusion

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These unique features of Islam make it the fastest growing religion in the world.