

Name: Warda Ghafoor ; Batch Number: 54 (NOA Academy)

- What is Islam? Enlist Salient Features of Islam. (8)

(1) Introduction:

As a monotheistic Abrahamic faith, Islam boasts nearly two billion adherents globally, making it one of the largest religions.

1.1 Literal Meaning:

Islam, an Arabic word, holds the literal meanings of "peace, submission and surrender."

1.2 Contextual Meaning:

In one contextual meaning, Islam signifies "entering into peace by submitting to the will of Allah." While in another, it denotes the "submission of desires to the will of Allah."

1.3 According to Shariah:

According to Shariah, Islam entails the "voluntary submission of desires to the will of Allah."

"Truly, the religion with Allah is Islam."

(Quran: 3:19)

(2) Salient Features of Islam:

2.1 Unique Concept of Tauheed:

The belief in the Oneness of God, known as Tauheed, serves as the cornerstone of Islam, highlighting that there is no god except Allah. The first part of Kalma presents the concept of Tauheed.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

Translation: There is no God but Allah.

Allah is recognized as omnipotent, omnipresent and the sustainer of both the world and humanity. Tauheed guides Muslims in their worship, daily life and interactions, shaping their relationship with Allah. Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) said:

“Whoever dies knowing that there is no god but Allah will enter Paradise.” (Hadith)

2.2 Complete Code of Life:

Muslims regard Islam as comprehensive. Islam provides guidance for individual and collective life, encompassing principles of worship, morality, education, family dynamics and societal interactions, thus serving as complete code.

“This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed my favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as a religion.”

(Surah Al-Maida: 3)

Islam places great emphasis on the institution of family and importance of maintaining strong family bonds. The Quran emphasizes mutual love and respect between spouses (Surah Ar-Rum: 21) and stresses rights and responsibilities of family members. Islam emphasizes proper up-bringing and nurturing of children. The Quran encourages parents to teach their children the importance of faith and righteous conduct (Surah At-Tahrim: 6).

Islam guides collective life in various domains, including political, financial, justice, administrative systems and global affairs. The Quran emphasizes the importance of consultation (Shura) in decision-making (Surah Ash-Shura: 38). Islam promotes accountability and public welfare in administrative matters and diplomacy and peaceful resolution of conflicts in global affairs. The Quran advocates for peaceful co-existence and dialogue among states (Surah Al-Mumtahanah: 8-9).

2.3 Prophethood:

Prophethood is the fundamental belief in

Islam, affirming that Allah has sent messengers to every community across history to lead people towards righteousness and warn against falsehood. Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H), being the last prophet is esteemed as the seal of the prophets and ultimate model for humanity.

“And We have not sent you (O Muhammad) except as a mercy to the worlds.”
(Surah Al-Anbiya: 107)

Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) has been sent to perfect and complete the message of previous prophets. Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) said:

“My similitude in comparison with other prophets before me is that of a man who has built a house nicely and beautifully, except for a place of one brick in corner. The people go about it and wonder at its beauty, but say: Would that this brick be put in its place!”

2.4 Promotes Humanity:

Islam promotes humanity and emphasizes the equality of all individuals, irrespective of their colour, language, race or nationality. Islam is international in its outlook and rejects prejudice.

In the farewell sermon, Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H) declared:

“All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over non-Arab, nor does non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; white has no superiority over black, nor does black have any superiority over a white.”

Islam teaches compassion and kindness towards animals. Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) prohibited the mistreatment of animals. He said:

“Whoever is kind to the creatures of Allah, he is kind to himself.”

Islam also teaches the stewardship of the Earth and emphasizes environmental conservation. Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) advocated for environmental sustainability and prohibits wastefulness. He said:

“Do not waste water even if you were at a running stream.”

2.5 Emphasis on Knowledge:

Islam emphasizes the pursuit of knowledge

and learning as pathways toward spiritual enlightenment, personal development and societal advancement. Within Islamic teachings, seeking knowledge is not only encouraged but regarded as religious obligation.

“Are those who know equal to those who do not know?”
(Surah Al-Zumar: 9)

Thus the quest of knowledge enables individuals to gain deeper insights into themselves, their faith and the world they inhabit.

2.6 Day of Judgment and Accountability:

Islam teaches the belief in the “Day of Judgment” where all individuals will be held accountable for their deeds in this worldly life.

“So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.”
(Surah Al-Zalzalah: 6-8)

Thus, this belief shapes the moral compass of Muslims, knowing that they will face divine judgment and eternal reward or punishment in the Hereafter.

2.7 Community and Brotherhood:

Islam promotes unity, solidarity and empathy among believers, fostering sense of belonging within Muslim community.

“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favour of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favour, brothers.”
(Surah Al-Imran: 103)

Thus, Muslims are bound together by common faith and a shared sense of responsibility towards one another.

2.8 Charity and Social Responsibility:

Islam underscores the significance of charity toward the disadvantaged and marginalized individuals within society. Central to this concept in Islam is Zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam.

“And those within whose wealth is a known right. For the petitioner and the deprived.”

(Surah Al-Ma'arij: 24-25)

The concept of charity and responsibility in Islam embodies values of compassion and empathy, urging Muslims to participate in acts of kindness and service.

2.9 Freedom of Conscience and Belief:

Islam upholds the right of individuals to choose their faith and practice their beliefs without coercion and compulsion. Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H) said:

“Beware! Whoever is cruel and hard on non-Muslim minority, or curtails their rights, or burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will, I will complain against the person on Day of Judgement.”

Thus, Islam advocates for the acceptance of diverse perspectives and protection of individual liberties:

2.10 Balance and Moderation:

Islam encourages Muslims to avoid extremism and to pursue middle path that encompasses spiritual fulfilment and social responsibility. Imam Al-Ghazali said:

“The path of moderation and balance is the essence of Islamic teachings. It encourages Muslims to avoid excesses and extremes in all aspects of life, promoting harmony, justice and compassion in their interactions with others.”

2.11 Jihad:

Jihad is a significant concept in Islam that encompasses various forms of struggle, including moral, spiritual, intellectual and physical efforts aimed at self-improvement and advancement of righteousness in society.

“Fight in the cause of God
those who fight you, but do not
transgress limits: for God loves
not transgressors.”

(Surah Al-Baqarah: 190)

Jihad is to be for the sake of Allah and to seek His pleasure.

2.12 Emphasis on Justice and Equity:

Islam encourages Muslims to uphold justice, fairness and equity in their personal conduct, within their communities and throughout society. Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) said:

“The just among you will be in
the company of prophets, the
truthful, the martyrs and the
righteous. Such is the company in
which you will desire to be.”

This Hadith highlights the high status accorded to those who uphold justice and fairness.

2.13 Promotion of Peace and Non-Violence:

Islam teaches Muslims to seek peaceful resolutions to conflicts and to show kindness and forgiveness towards others. Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) said:

“A true believer is one with whom others feel secure. One who returns love for hatred.”

Thus, Islam condemns acts of terrorism, aggression and oppression and encourages peaceful coexistence among individuals of diverse faiths and background.

2.14 Excellence in Worship and Conduct:

Islam emphasizes sincere devotion to Allah and exemplary behavior in all aspects of life in accordance with teachings of Quran and the example of Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H.).

“Certainly will the believers have succeeded: They who are during their prayer humbly submissive.”
(Surah Al-Mu'minun: 1-2)

This verse highlights the significance of humility and sincerity in worship.

2.15 Principle of Qadr:

The principle of Qadr encompasses that Allah has predestined everything that occurs in the universe, including human actions, events and outcomes.

“Indeed, all things We created with predestination.”
(Surah Al-Qamar: 49)

However, Islam teaches that while Allah has decreed all things, individuals still possess free will and ability to make choices. But these choices are within the framework of Allah's divine decree.

(3) Conclusion:

Islam serves as universal faith that offers guidance in every facet of life. It transcends temporal, geographical and ethnic boundaries, making it relevant to the whole of mankind. Amidst contemporary challenges such as terrorism and Islamophobia, Islam remains a beacon of spiritual enlightenment, community cohesion and cultural identity for Muslims globally.