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ISLAMIAT (Ass #1)

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Q.] What is Islam? Explain salient features of Islam.

Ans.] Introduction:

Islam is the monotheistic religion revealed upon Prophet Muhammad (SAW). It is the second most-followed religion in the world. Islam demands its follower (Muslim) to submit to the will of Allah. Will of Allah can be known by the words of Allah SWT in the Holy Quran, or through Ahadith (Prophet's sayings) especially Hadith-e-Qudsi (words of Allah SWT revealed upon Prophet Muhammad SAW but not mentioned in Holy Quran).

Reference: Al-Quran, Surah Baqarah (2:208),
Allah says:

"O you who have believed, enter into Islam completely, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you, ~~the~~ a clear enemy."

Literal Meaning

The word Islam is derived from an arabic word *slm* (سلم), which means to surrender and peace.

The word "Islam" was first used by Allah SWT in the Quran; the previous name of Islam was "Deen-e-Haneef".

Contextual Meaning

The contextual meaning of Islam is to enter in peace by surrendering to the will of Allah, or the voluntary submission of desires to the will of Allah is called Islam.

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

"Let there be no compulsion in religion."

Islam According to Different Scholars

i) Imam Ghazali :

"Islam is the amalgamation of rights of

Allah and rights of mankind."

ii) Dr. Hamidullah (Author)

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

iii) Maulana Sadar Uddin Islahi:

"Islam is the combination of two things: faiths and worships."

Salient Features of Islam

1) Tawhid

Tawhid is the first and most important part of Islam. It signifies the importance of believing in the oneness of God (Allah). It is the fundamental pillar of Islam as it constitutes the first part of Kalma. Along with oneness, one who calls oneself Muslim, should believe in the ultimate sovereignty and omnipotence of Allah; that Allah SWT is the sustainer and provider

of everything that exists.

Allah says in Surah Al-Ikhlâs (112:1):

"Say, He (Allah) is one and indivisible."

2) Prophet-hood

The concept of prophet-hood in Islam states that Allah has chosen certain people as his prophets, tasked with conveying the divine guidance and commandments to mankind. As mentioned in the Quran, Allah SWT has sent numerous prophets for those astray, such as Fir'awn, Bani Israel etc., to take guidance from and be among the righteous people. Certain prophets mentioned in the Quran include: Prophet Adam (AS), Ibrahim (AS), ~~and~~ Musa (AS), and Muhammad (PBUH).

Along with prophet-hood, believing in the finality of prophet-hood is among the fundamental pillars of Islam, as mentioned in the second part of Kalma.

Allah says in Surah Al-Ahzab (33:40):

"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but the messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets....."

3) Undeniably Truthful

The veracity of Islam as a true religion can be verified through the undeniable scientific facts revealed by Allah (SWT) in the Holy Quran. For instance, the description of embryological development in Surah Al-Muminun (23:12-14), which describes the stages of human fetal development, and the description of expanding universe in Surah Adh-Dhariyat (51:47), which mentions the expansion of universe, are some of the scientific facts discovered by modern science which were written in the Quran 1400 years ago. Such facts represent and confirm the truthfulness of Islam.

4) Complete Guide to Life

Islam isn't merely confined to the prayers, worships, and rituals. The concept of Islam spans from living a successful individual life to a peaceful collective society. It provides mankind the divinely revealed social, political, economic, legal, moral, national, and international systems to lead their life and manage their everyday affairs. Moreover, Islam also codifies the family rights by defining the rights of every relation.

IF, in case, something seems to be unanswered or left unguided in the teachings of Islam, the way Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) spent his life, is enough for the people to take the guidance from.

Allah says in Surah Al-Hadid (57:25) :

"Indeed, We sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and with them We sent down the Scripture and the balance of justice so that

people may administer justice....."

5) Universal Deen

All men, no matter what their race, color, language, or nationality is, are all equal in Islam. Everyone, no matter from what corner of the world they come in, is welcomed in Islam. Islam believes that nothing else is above the dignity of mankind. Therefore, Islam was chosen for all of the mankind, and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent as a messenger and mercy for all (not just for Muslims).

Allah says in Surah Al-Araf (7:158):

"Say, O prophet, "O humanity! I am Allah's Messenger to you all....."

6) Life after Death

One of intriguing concepts of Islam is the life and accountability after death. Islam defines world as a place of trial. Those who obey the commands of Allah

and follow the messenger, shall be succeeded and rewarded accordingly in the hereafter. Those who follow their desires and follow the footsteps of satan, shall be punished accordingly in the hereafter. This concept of accountability in the next life awakens in ^{man} a sense of being righteous, just, and obedient to Allah SWT, to not put his hereafter in jeopardy and succeed in this life and the next.

Allah says in Surah Al-Isra (17:14):

"And it will be said, 'Read your record. You 'alone' are sufficient (this day) to take account of yourself.'"

7. Promotes Humanity

The teachings of Islam such as having a good character, social services, charity, medical services, women rights, animal rights, environment protection, all reflect the paramount importance given to the humanity in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad

SAW in his last sermon, emphasized upon the fulfillment of rights of women who were then subjected to disgrace and harm before the advent of Islam in the Arabian peninsula.

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."

8) Dignity of Mankind

Allah (SWT) made humans (man) his caliph, and thus, blessed him with dignity. Allah, also, made the mankind best among his creatures. To be precise, every sin in Islam is said to be forgiven if one repents sincerely except the sin of associating partners with Allah. However, when Allah created first ever human being, Hazrat Adam (AS), he ordered the angels to prostrate before Adam because he

was the best of his creatures. Such an honor reflects the dignity Allah (SWT) has blessed the mankind with.

Allah says in Surah Al-Isra (17:70)

"Indeed, We have dignified the children of Adam, carried them on land and sea, granted them good and lawful provisions, and privileged them far above many of Our creatures."

9) Development of Society and Individual

On one hand, Islam teaches man to establish his regular prayers, worship Allah SWT, and perform good deeds to achieve individual and spiritual elevation in his connection with Allah (SWT).

While on the other hand, Islam instructs man to respect and fulfill the rights of his brothers and sisters in Islam. For instance, the concept of zakat in Islam is also about helping and fulfilling the rights of our underprivileged brothers and sisters.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said:

"He is not a believer who takes his fill while his neighbor starves."

Respecting and fulfilling the rights of one another leads to the collective harmony and peace in the society.

10) Camaraderie

The teachings of Islam foster the element of brotherhood and unity among Muslims. Muslims have been ordered to establish their daily prayer with congregation so that the poor and the rich, the white and the black, the younger and elder, may feel that they all are equal in the sight of Allah irrespective of their social status, and thus, they should respect and honor one another.

The story of Hazrat Umar (RA), while he was traveling to Jerusalem along with a

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companion and a camel, (that he didn't sit continuously on the camel throughout the journey and allowed his companion to sit as well, reflects that the true essence of Islam is kept in brotherhood and affection for others.

Narrated Anas Ibn Malik, the Prophet (SAW) said:

"None of you will have faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."

(Sahih Bukhari, Book 2, Hadith 12)