

Question:

What is Islam? and what are its salient features?

⇒ Introduction:-

Islam is the religion of truth. It is a complete code of life that provides guidance for the creations of Allah in every aspect of life. A man needs two things in order to survive in this world. The very first thing being "material things and needs," to live a life and the second thing being "the principles and paths" to live individual and social life with peace. Allah (S.W.T) has provided both for mankind.

The material needs are being fulfilled through the natural resources that Allah has kept for human's disposal. And the spiritual and social guidance through his prophets and scriptures that He (S.W.T) sent to his creations.

This divine guidance is called Islam.

⇒ Meaning of Islam:-

Islam is an Arabic word, and the interpretation of its meaning

can be done in three perspectives.

- Literal:-

The root word of Islam is (S, L, M) or (س, ل, م), which means "peace, submission or surrender."

- Contextual:-

In contextual words, Islam means "To enter in "peace" by "submitting" to the will of Allah".

- Shariah:-

According to Shariah;

"Voluntary submission of desires to the will of Allah is called Islam".

- Islam according to Quran:-

In Quran, we can find several ayats that provide the reference for Islam as being the religion from Allah and being the true religion.

In Surah AL-Rum, ayat 30;

Allah (S.W.T) says;

"So direct your face toward the religion inclining to the truth. [Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah upon which He (S.W.T) has created (all) people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion but most people don't know".

In another ayats, He (s.w.T) says,

ان الدين عند الله الاسلام

"Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam."

Thus, the above ayats, give a clear direction for his creations to follow and there remains no compulsion between humans about ^{other} religions, as well.

• Islam in Hadiths-

Holy Prophet (s.A.w) being the ^{last} messenger of Allah, gave guidance to humanity while acting upon the true religion Islam.

There is a narration of Abu Hurairah (R.A) and the context of this narration is that, once in a gathering of Sahaba's, a man came and approached Holy Prophet (s.A.w) and asked him about several questions like what is Iman?, Ihsan and then he asked what does Islam signify? At this question, Holy Prophet (s.A.w) answered that "Al-Islam signifies that you worship Allah and do not associate anything with Him and you establish Obligatory prayer and you pay the Zakat.

and you observe the fast of Ramadan." then the man asked about akhirah and after getting his answers, he went away. Holy Prophet (S.A.W) told us that this man was Jibraeel (A.S) and he was here to teach you Deen.

• Islam according to Scholars:-

Many scholars have presented different definitions of Islam but all of them explain the different perspectives of Islam.

Dr. Hameedullah a renowned scholar says that

"Islam is a monotheist deen, revealed upon prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Imam Ghazali (R.A) said that Islam is

"Rights of Allah and rights of people".

Molana Sadar-uddin-Islahi says in his book "Islam ek nazari mein", that,

"Islam is a combination of faith and worships."

The above references give a brief overview of Islam and its true meaning and about the priority of its in human life.

⇒ Salient features of Islam:-

Islam represents some characteristics that make it unique and distinguishable from other religions.

1. Concept of Tawheed:-

To enter in Islam, it is compulsory to say "kalima" which makes a person to a newborn muslim. "There is no God but Allah"

The first part of kalima is the acceptance of oneness of Allah.

In Quran surah Ikhlaas ^{ayat} (1-4), Allah says;

"Say Allah is the One and only God. Allah upon whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And there is nothing which can be compared to Him."

The importance of Tawheed can be measured by this Hadith of Holy prophet (S.A.W);

"He who dies associating anything with Allah, will enter the fire (hell)."
(Sahih Muslim 92)

Being able to become a part of Islam, must mean the belief and faith in the oneness of Allah.

This concept clearly demolishes all

the other gods made up by humans.

As the Ameen Ahsan Islahi also stated that,

“Tawheed is the most significant issue in Islam. It is the center of Din. It is the point where the faith originates.”

(Book ref Haqeeqat-e-Tawhid)

2- Prophethood:-

“Risalat” is the second part of Kalima that completes it:

Belief in “Risalat” means to have faith in the finality of prophethood.

The second characteristic of Islam that makes the difference is the a Muslim believes in other prophets as well as in the prophethood of Holy Prophet (S.A.W).

In Quran Allah says;

هَذَا نَزِيرٌ مِنَ النَّذِيرِ الْأُولَى

“This (prophet) is a warner like the former warners.”

This ayat refines the concept of prophethood, but one should keep in mind that the main part of Islam is to believe in the finality of Holy prophet (S.A.W).

Sa'ad Ibn Waqqas (R.A) narrated that, Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said to Ali (R.A).

"You are to me as Harun (A.S) was to Musa (A.S), as except that there will be no messengers after me."

3- Complete code of life:-

Islam is the only religion that guides mankind in both individual as well as social perspectives.

• Individual:-

Islam supports a person in his individual life the most. From birth to the upbringing of human, Allah (S.W.T) has laid down the paths for us to follow clearly.

May it be the health of a person or education, Islam has presented clear guidance for him.

Allah (S.W.T) encourages humans to do hardwork and get what they want in life.

"Man shall have nothing but what he strives for" (Al Quran 53:39)

Regarding the health of a person, Allah ^{Prop(her) (PBUH)} (S.W.T) says,

"A strong believer is better and dearer to Allah than a weaker one, and both are good."

It is also encourages to gain knowledge in Islam,

Holy Prophet (s.a.w) said
"Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every muslim (man or woman)."

• Social life:

Islam gives complete guidance about social life and how a society should perform.

The morals of society has been set by Quran and Sunnah from a long time.

Such as Islam provides principles about how to lead justice, how to rule a state, and how to give rights to other muslims.

The importance of building a peaceful social life and society can be determined by this ayat of Quran.

"(Muslims are) those who if we give them power in land, establish (the system of) Salat (prayer and worship) and Zakat (poor due) and enjoin virtue and forbid vice and evil" (AL Quran 22:41)

4- Dignity of Mankind:

Islam has made mankind the vicegerent of Allah on Earth. He is called as the caliph of

Allah and the purpose of mankind is to fill the will of God on earth.

It is the most respectable position one could ever get. In Quran

Allah (S.W.T) says,

"And we have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what we have created, with (definite) preference." (Al Quran 17:70)

5- Universality and Humanity:-

Islam is a vast religion and the most welcoming religion as well. Its teachings are not bounded to Muslims only but it is for everyone (may it be Jewish, Christians, atheists or even Jinnat).

There is no racism in the eyes of Allah and he has strictly prohibited us to do so as well.

Moreover, Islam also promotes Humanity. It is not bounded to or limited to humans only, but it is also for animals and environment.

It is encouraged to have a good character and be good to your family and also to give charity.

Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said

"The best among the believers in faith are those who are best in character, and the best of you, are those who are best to their women"

(Abu Hurairah - Tirmidhi)

Holy Prophet (S.A.W) himself were embodiment of mercy and humanity. He (S.A.W) was most kind to animals and children.

During one of the occasions, when Holy prophet (S.A.W) were showing love to children and playing with them, a person said that he has no children and he never showed love to any of them. At this Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said, "The one with no pity for others, is not pitied"

(Bukhari, Adab, 18)

6- Permanence and change.

A society cannot work until or unless it has set rules of permanence and change in co-existence.

Islam promotes stability as well as change.

The stability and permanence of rules and regulations is necessary to run a society or even an individual life. So, Islam has

set some established rules that cannot be changed in form of Quran and Sunnah, However, there are also sometimes when there is a dire need of change or flexibility in a society.

It mostly depends on the modernization of era, as it would need modern rules to exist. So, "Ijtihad" concept in Islam deals with the problems that were not mentioned or couldn't be dealt with according to Quran or Sunnah.

7. Simplicity, rationalism and practicism:

Humans need a religion where no mythology exists. So, Islam is the religion that does not involve any mythology, but rather it is simple, logical and reasonable religion.

To understand Islam and to prevent one-self from myths or superstitions, Islam has given great importance to gaining knowledge.

Allah (s.w.T) says.

"Those who do not observe and understand are worse than cattle".

(7:179)

It is logical that you can only practice and understand a religion if you have good knowledge and

no doubt about it.

It Islam is also easy to practice and as it contemplates with the our everyday life.

In the context of Surah Haqq Allah says that he has laid no hardship on humans in this religion.

8. Islam encourages Indulgence :-

According to the conservative mindsets of western world, they think Islam is only about cutting off yourself from worldly affairs however, it is not true.

Islam does not supports asceticism.

In Quran Allah says that

" Say (to them), by whose order have you denied yourself those amenities which God has created for His people and those good things to eat and use (which He has created for you)? "

(Al Quran, 7: 32)

Holy Prophet (S.A.W) said that

" A muslim who lives in the midst of society and bears with patience, the afflictions that came to him is better than the one who shuns society and cannot bear any wrong done to him."

9. Preservation of teachings:-

The most important characteristic of Islam is that its teachings are preserved till date and there has been no adulteration in it.

Allah (s.w.t) says in Quran;

ان من نزلنا الذر واننا له لحفظون

"It is certainly we who have revealed the reminder and it is certainly we who will preserve it!"
(15: 9)

Even the Sunnah of Holy prophet (s.w.a.w) has been preserved and is followed by the muslims.

Muslims played a great role in preservation of Quran and Sunnah and most of this work was done by Holy Prophet (s.w.a.w) and his companions.

10- Islam as a complement:-

Islam's teachings are similar to the previous teachings that were presented to humanity by other religions. However, with the passage of time, these teachings are faced adulteration and does not contain the exact message any more.

Moreover, there was a dire need of a modern religion that covers

and address the modern issues of society. So Islam came into existence.

In Quran Allah (S.W.T) confirms this fact;

"And we have revealed to you, (O Muhammad), the book in truth, confirming that which is preceded of the scriptures and as a criterion over it"

(Al-Quran 5:48)

11.

✓ Concept of Akhirat :-

A muslim believes that this world is temporary placement and it is a trial for ~~muslim~~^{human} to see how he behaves and that there is to come the judgment for every action of human being and then we would be either rewarded or punished accordingly.

This sense of day of judgment brings fear and tranquility in the hearts of Muslims. Fear of doing bad and not being able to get away with it and tranquility that his hardships would be rewarded and won't get ignored.

"On that Day, you will be brought to judgement and none of your secrets will remain hidden". (69: 18) .

⇒ Conclusion:-

Islam is the religion of peace and guidance for humanity, and there is no denying in the fact that Islam brings justice, tranquility, discipline and sense of peace in human society.