

Assignment : 1

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Q: What is Islam? Elaborate the salient features of Islam.

Answer:

Introduction:

'Islam' is an Arabic word. It means the act of resignation to God. The root word is **SLM**, pronounced 'salm' which means peace from which comes the word 'aslama' which means he submitted, he resigned himself.

Al-Islam or Islam is the religion which brings peace to mankind when man commits himself to God and submits himself to His will.

According to the Holy Book revealed to Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be on him), this is the only true religion professed by all prophets from Adam to Muhammad (PBUH), the Last Prophet.

Literal meaning of Islam:

The root word is SLM, which means: Peace. Another meaning is Submission, surrender.

Contextual meaning of Islam: To enter in peace by submitting to the will of Allah.

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Voluntary submission to the Will of Allah
and entering into Peace is Islam.

Shariah's perspective: Shariah has empowered
us in professing the Din of Islam
as Voluntaryness is the condition to accept and
enter Islam.

As it is stated in the Holy Quran:

لا إكراه في الدين

"There is no compulsion in religion"
(2:256)

This means:

Islam has given us freedom of will. Therefore, we
are also accountable for our actions.

لكم ديتكم ديتكم

"You have your religion, and I have
my religion"
(6:109)
(109:6)

Definition of Islam:

Dr Hamidullah, in his book
Introduction to Islam, define Islam in
these words:

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Islam is a monotheist Din revealed upon Prophet Muhammad (SAW)

Imam Ghazali : Imam al-Ghazali defines Islam as "A comprehensive code of life, encompassing all aspects of human existence, from beliefs and worships to knowledge and morality."

Salient features of Islam:

Islam stands distinct among the world's major faiths through its foundational doctrines and principles. These distinctive aspects not only shape the lives of its followers but also offer a unique perspective on spirituality, ethics, and community living. The clarity of its teachings, combined with a rational approach to belief and practice, ensures that Islam remains accessible and relevant to followers across different cultures and epochs, promoting a balance between spiritual devotion and practical daily living. The Quran states that in the eyes of Allah, only Islam constitutes the true Din, as described in 3:19 (Surah Al-Imran verse 19)

ان الدين عند الله الاسلام

"Truly, the Din in the sight of Allah is Islam"

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Let's discuss some of the features of Islam:

1) Unique concept of Tauheed (توحيد) Oneness/

Tauheed - The Bed-Rock of Islam:

Tauheed is a revolutionary concept and constitutes the essence of the teachings of Islam. It means that there is only One Supreme Lord of the universe. He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and the Sustainer of the world and of mankind.

As stated in the Holy Quran:

In Surah - Ikhlas, Allah says:

قل هو الله احد

Say, O Prophet, He is Allah - One and Indivisible

(112:1)

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the concept of Tawhid in various hadiths. One such example is

Narrated by Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him):

"Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: 'Say, I believe in Allah' and then remain steadfast (on that belief)."

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Tauheed is also the first part of Kalimah tauheed:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

(There is no deity but Allah).

2) Aqeedah Risalat and Finality of Prophethood :

The second part of the Kalimah signifies that God has not left man without any guidance for the conduct of his life. He has revealed His Guidance through His Prophets and Muhammad (PBUH) was the last prophet. Therefore, to believe in a Prophet means to believe in Allah's message, to accept the Law which He gave and to follow the Code of Conduct which He taught.

This is the second basic postulate of Islam.

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

(Prophet Muhammad is His messenger.)

In Surah Izzab, Allah says:

"Muhammad (SAW) is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Last of the Prophets. And ever is Allah, of all things, Knowing"

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3) Dignity to Mankind

Islam grants dignity to mankind. Man is the superior of all the creations of Almighty Allah. He has been bestowed with the faculty of reasoning and thinking.

It is mentioned in The Holy Quran that:

And mention, O Muhammad, when your Lord said to the Angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority"

(2:30)

Moreover, In Surah Bani-Israel, Allah says:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

"_____ Indeed, we have dignified the children of Adam _____"

(We have certainly created man in the best of stature) (لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ)

4) Complete Code of Life:

The religion Islam is a complete code of life. It guides in every aspect of life be it individual or collective, personal or public.

It also provides rules and laws regarding

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social and political systems, Financial systems, Judicial systems as well as global affairs.

5) Divinity : The Distinctive Essence of Islam

There is no denying the fact that divinity is the distinctive essence of Islam. Unique and superior to other Religions, Islam originates from a divine source, not concocted by human design like some other faiths. Unlike Buddhism and Sikhism, which were founded by revered figures like Gautama Buddha and Guru Nanak respectively, Islam's foundation is rooted in revelation from Allah, without any human authorship.

This unique aspect highlights the contrast between Islam, a divinely guided Din, and other Religions, which have human founders and reflect their philosophies.

6) All-Inclusiveness : The Comprehensive Scope of Islam

Islam's all inclusiveness is epitomized by its recognition as a complete code of life, integrating the spiritual, moral and social dimensions of human existence into a cohesive whole. Unlike religions that may focus narrowly on spiritual matters or specific aspects of human behaviour, Islam encompasses a broad spectrum of human experience. The concept of a complete code of life means that Islam provides comprehensive instructions not only for worship

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and spiritual development but also for interpersonal conduct, governance, and the cultivation of a just society.

Surah Al-Maidah (5:3) encapsulates this concept, where Allah states,

اليوم اكملت لكم دينكم واتممت عليكم نعمتي ورضيت لكم الاسلام ديناً

"Today, I have perfected your din for you, and have completed My blessing upon you, and chosen Islam as Din for you" (5:3)

7) Intertwined Relationship between Religious and Social Life :

Islam profoundly shapes both the social and religious aspects of life for its followers, intertwining these spheres in a way that it is both comprehensive and holistic. This integration goes beyond mere spiritual beliefs to include aspects of worship, social justice, family life and community involvement, all guided by the Five Pillars of Islam. These foundational principles practices foster a strong sense of community and social responsibility. Unlike Christianity, where devotion is often marked by celibacy – the choice to abstain from marriage – Islam advocates for a

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balanced approach to life. It encourages its adherents to fulfill family and societal obligations alongside their spiritual practices, thereby rejecting celibacy and monasticism. This philosophy promotes the integration of faith into all life areas, ensuring that religious and social duties complement and enrich one another. Thus, monkhood is prohibited in Islam.

لا رهبانية في الاسلام

“Monkhood has no place in Islam”

8) Enduring Preservation of Doctrine

The enduring preservation of doctrine stands out as a distinctive aspect of Islam when compared to other Religions. This uniqueness is rooted in the divine commitment to safeguard the integrity and purity of the Quran across generations, ensuring that its teachings, principles and laws remain consistent and unaltered. Unlike the Quran, the Torah and Injil are not in their original forms. This distinguishes Islam's approach to scripture preservation, reinforcing the Quran's role as an unchanging source of divine guidance.

This commitment by Allah to protect the Quran is encapsulated in the verse 15:9, which states,

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انا نحن نزلنا الذكر وانا له لحفظون

"Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, we will be its guardian"
(15:9)

9) Universality : Global Resonance of Islam

The Universal appeal of Islam lies in its message, which transcends geographical, racial and ethnic boundaries. This universality is evident in its rapid spread across the world, adapting to various cultures while retaining its core principles. This highlights Islam's relevance and enduring appeal. It is a universal way of life, offering comprehensive guidance for all mankind, going beyond specific times and places.

In Judaism, inheritance is a significant aspect, particularly the passing down of religious identity through matrilineal descent. According to traditional Jewish law, a child born to Jewish mother is considered Jewish. Whereas, In Quran, Allah addresses all people with the phrase "يا ايها الناس", which transcends specific times, places, or tribes. Moreover by calling Muhammad (SAW) the Prophet of all people in the Holy Quran, Islam exemplifies its universality.

"Say (O Muhammad): O mankind! Lo! I am the messenger of Allah to you all."
(7:158)

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10) Intelligibility : The Clarity of Islamic Teachings:

Another distinctive aspect of Islam is the clarity and accessibility of its teachings. The Quran, along with the Hadith, is revered for its eloquent language and profound messages. This intelligibility ensures that the essential teachings of Islam are understandable to all, facilitating personal reflection and spiritual growth. In contrast, the scholars of Bani Israel, despite their deep knowledge of the Torah, were criticized for concealing its true teachings and misleading people, motivated by financial gain. This comparison underlines a commitment in Islam to divine guidance, setting it apart from those who, despite possessing knowledge, chose to distort truth for personal advantage. Such actions are juxtaposed against the approach of Islam where, as highlighted in the Quran (13:02) Surah - ur - Raad

يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ

"He makes the signs clear."

(13:02)

11) Rationality : The value of reason in Islam

Islam places a high value on reason and encourages its followers to seek knowledge and understanding. Islam's history is rich / replete with scholars, scientists

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and thinkers who have contributed significantly to various fields of knowledge. Islam's emphasis on critical thinking and inquiry underscores its recognition of human intellect and its role in understanding faith and the world. The Quran encourages reflection, contemplation and observation of the natural world as signs of Allah's creation. Quran is filled with phrases like :

افلا تتفكرون

افلا تعقلون

افلا ينظرون

(Al-Quran)

افلا يتدبرون

Moreover, in Surah Taha, we find evidences of creation of the Universe and the Big Bang Theory

"Did the disbelievers not observe that the heavens and the earth were closed, ~~and~~ then We opened them?" (21:30)

12) Practicality: The Application of Faith in Daily Life

The practical aspect of Islam is evident in its teachings, which are designed to be implemented

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in daily life. The Religion's practices, such as the Five Pillars of Islam, not only nurture spiritual growth but also promote social welfare and cohesion. This distinction arises from the perfection of its laws, which are aligned with human nature, making it a practical way of life.

Examples:

- Flexibility of Salah, which is shortened (QASAR) during travel to accommodate the challenges faced on the move
- Fasting during Ramadan is designed with consideration for human limits, lasting from dawn till sunset, as opposed to extended periods seen in other religions. This reflects Islam's Adaptability.

Allah affirms this in Quran:

"He is the One Who has sent His Messengers with 'right' guidance and the din of truth."

13) Dynamicity and Rigidity: The equilibrium between Adaptability and Constancy.

Islam demonstrates a unique balance between adaptability and constancy. While it is firmly rooted in its core beliefs and practices, such as the

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unwavering commitment to Tawheed and belief in the afterlife, which have remained consistent from the time of Hazrat Adam (As) to Hazrat Muhammad (saw), it allows for flexibility in response to changing social and cultural contexts.

This rigid aspect ensures that certain principles, like the immorality of lying, theft etc remain constant, marking every evil as consistently sinful throughout Islamic history. On the other hand, its dynamic nature is exemplified by the concept of Ijtihad, which refers to the making of new laws according to the needs of time. This aspect enables Islam to remain relevant in the modern world, addressing contemporary issues while staying true to its timeless principles.

ۛ سکوں حال ۛ قدرت کے کارخانے میں

ثبات اک تغیر کو ۛ زمانے میں

(Allama Iqbal)

Conclusion

In conclusion, Islam's distinctive aspects illuminate its role as a major world faith that harmonizes divine commandments with human needs. It promotes the use of intellect, encouraging its followers to seek understanding and wisdom in their faith. Its teachings are marked by universality, appealing to people across different cultures and epochs, characterized by

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clarity and accessibility. It emphasizes practicality, making spirituality an integral part of daily actions and decisions. Thus, Islam stands as the singular Din chosen by Allah, aimed at guiding humanity towards prosperity in both this life and the hereafter. As affirmed in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:132), Allah prefers and likes the Din of Islam, cementing its significance and divine approval.

"Allah has certainly chosen for you the Din. So, let not death overtake you but as Muslims"

(2:132)