

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

Meaning & Concept of Islam:

Islam is the religion of Truth. Islam is an Arabic word derived from 'SLM' which literally means peace. Truly with the remembrance of Allah our mind & body finds peace. Islam means to enter in peace by submitting to the ~~des~~ will of Allah or its the submission of desires to the will of Allah. According to shariah, Islam is the name of voluntary submission of desires to the will of Allah.

Imam Ghazali:

"Islam is the combination of rights of Allah & people."

Surah Kafiroon (109:06)

"For you is your religion, & for me is my religion."

Allama Iqbal

"Islam is not merely a matter of personal belief or ritual worship, but a system of life which provides spiritual, political & ethical guidance to humanity."

Islam is complete & a universal deen. It guides us in every aspect of life & is not time limited, like all the prior religions that were introduced to mankind. The message

of Islam is present in the Last Holy Book revealed upon Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Islam is not confined to any particular geographic area & is not limited to a specific ethnicity, unlike other religions. Islam is for entire mankind. It's the ideal system for living for all mankind. Allah refers to all mankind in the Quran.

Surah Maidah (5:15)

"... There has come to you from Allah a light & a clear Book."

Salient Features:

① Tawheed; Essence of Islam:

Tawheed is a revolutionary concept. It's the first part of Kalma, which refers to 'belief in the Oneness of God'. Tawheed lays the foundation for other aspects of the belief for example; Prophethood.

Tawheed is the core belief or principle on which the rest of the factors of faith depend or come from. If one believes in the oneness of Allah only then will; he submit to worship of God, perform all obligatory acts & rituals, & run the systems with absolute guidance.

Surah Ikhlas (112: 1-4)

"Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,
Allah, The Eternal Refuge.
He neither begets nor is born,
Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

Surah Baqarah (2: 163)

"And your god, is One God. There
is no deity [worthy of worship]
except Him, The Entirely Merciful,
The Especially Merciful."

The importance of Tawheed is also reflected
by:

Allama Shibli Nomani:

"Tawheed is the first chapter of
Islamic syllabus."

"Islam is like a fort & the gate
of that fort is Tawheed."

Imam Al-Ghazali:

"Tawheed is the foundation of a building
no matter how tall the structure, if
the foundation is weak, it will collapse."

② Prophethood:

Prophethood is the second part of Kalma. Faith
remains incomplete till finality of the
prophethood is added. Belief in prophets comes
with belief on their revelation, laws transmitted
& also following his code of conduct

Surah Ahzab (33:40)

"Muhammad is not the father of anyone of your men, but the Messenger of Allah & the Seal of Prophets."

By looking at the Prophet (PBUH), the correct way of ^{living} life is acquired, whether it's concerned with laws or rules, rights, education, war & self-defense & much more. Prophet (PBUH) is a role model for the entire human kind.

Hadith:

"Verily, I have been sent as a teacher to mankind."

Surah Ahzab (33:21)

"There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah & the Last Day & [who] remembers Allah often."

③ Life after Death:

The third most important belief feature of Islam is the belief in the life hereafter.

The world is a temporary place of trial for man & he is being judged. Some abide by the Divine law, others don't, they are not at the same level of existence. Man will be accountable for his lifetime;

Surah Yasin (36:51-54)

"The trumpet will be blown, & all
once they will rush from their
graves to their Lord ... Today
no soul will be wronged in
the least, & you will now be
recompensed for what you
used to do."

Thus, one must reflect upon what we do on
regular basis, keep a check on ourself,
our actions & deeds so that we
remain on track.

④ Dignity to Mankind:

Islam protects the entire mankind. Islam
does not deal with racial discrimination,
tribal superiority, slavery, or oppression
of the weak. But talks about equal
& just treatment of all, rights of orphans,
needy & widows are also not ignored.

Surah Bani Israel (17:70)

"Certainly, we have honored the children
of Adam".

This ayah has 4 different themes being addressed
here;

a) Human is the superior one, out of all
creation of God. After Allah the most
respected are humans.

b) The criteria of respect is not confined to

a particular religion, such as Non-Muslims.

c) Males as well as female have equal respect & honor.

d) Third gender is also included in this circle of respect without discrimination.

Surah Al-Imran (3:26)

"Say, O Prophet, 'O Allah! Lord over all authorities! You give authority to whoever You please & remove it from who You please, You honor whoever You please & disgrace who You please ...'"

⑤ Complete Code of Life:

Islam is a complete guidance source which covers every conceivable department of human affairs. Its not only limited to acts of worship.

Islam is a source of guidance for individual personal life matters. This include; man-God relationship strengthening guidelines, building faith & personal character as well as moral values like; truthfulness, forgiveness & many more. Islam provides a step-wise guidance for every phase of life, may it be concerned with birth or death or livelihood of an individual.

Hadith:

"I have left among you two things; you will never go astray as long as you hold fast to them; The Book of Allah & my Sunnah."

Islam not only provides guidelines for individual life, it also covers social life interactions.

Principle of social justice, equality, fairness, mutual co-operation & peace all fall in this category. Other than system of family, society & state, Islam gives clear guidance in matters of economy, politics, law, education as well as international relations. Islam shapes a balanced society, ensuring individual welfare & common good.

⑥ Islam Protects Humanity:

Humanity is referred to as natural positive instincts. This means to spread love, care, positivity, sympathy, empathy to all creation including non-Muslims & animals without discrimination. Talking about human rights & environment protection also fall under humanity. Other factors are as follows:

a) Good Character:

Islam emphasis on the importance of moral excellence so that humanity & peace remains intact.

b) Charity:

One of the greatest financial worship is

charity (sadaqah). Second in line is Sadaqah. (voluntary charity). Charity reduces poverty & builds compassion in society.

Surah Baqrah (2: 110).

"And establish prayer & practice charity, & whatever good you put forward for yourselves - you will find it with Allah."

c) Social Work:

According to Islam serving community, supporting orphans & helping the vulnerable are also a part of humanity.

Shaykh Wasiullah Abbas:

"Your smile in the face of your brother is charity."

d) Provision of Medical Services:

Providing treatment & healthcare without discrimination is also emphasized by Islam.

Hadith - e- Qudsi:

"Allah shows displeasure from a person who never visits an ill person."

e) Fulfilment of Human Rights:

Islam also safeguards dignity, life, property & honor of every individual. Islam talks about equality & justice, no one is deprived of

basic rights.

Farewell Sermon:

"Your blood, your property, & your honor are sacred to you like the sacredness of this day, in this month, in this city."

f) Animal Rights:

The seriousness of animal rights can be determined by the situation when Prophet (PBUH) recommended a person just because his camel was thirsty.

g) Environment Protection:

Protection of natural resources, sustainable use of resources, planting trees is a must considering that future generations also have ample resources. §

Hadith:

"Don't cut green trees even if you are in case of war."

⑦ Unique Significance in the name Islam

Islam denotes submission, surrender & obedience to God. Other religions have their names after either their tribe or ethnicity (Judaism), their founders (Christianity, Buddhism) or the geographic region (Hinduism). ~~Now~~ Islam, in contrast, not only manifests the outlook on life but its name itself is a proof that Allah has revealed it without any human association.

Surah Al-e-Imran (3:19)

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

⑧ Preservation & Authenticity:

Quran is the primary source of guidance. Allah, Himself, has promised to safeguard this Islamic scripture. Thus, no ~~can~~ amendments have been made in its original form & no questions are raised over the authenticity of Islam.

Allah says,

"We have, no doubt sent down the message, We will assuredly guard it from corruption." (15:9).

⑨ Permanent as well as Dynamic:

Permanence & change can co-exist in human society. If there is extreme emphasis on permanence in a society the system becomes rigid & robs flexibility & progress. Whereas, lack of permanent values & unchanging elements may result in shapelessness & anarchy.

Islam is a balance of permanence & dynamism. Permanence consisting of its core principles; Tauheed, Prophethood, Life hereafter, pillars of Islam & moral values. Its dynamic factor makes flexible, adaptive system to meet the needs of changing time & circumstances. This is possible due to Ijtihad & Qiyas.

Permanence results in stability & dynamism
results in practicality.

⑩ Simplicity & Ease:

Islam rejects unnecessary hardships & complications. It not only talks about straight-forward worship, but also leading a modest lifestyle (without waste & extravagance) & also provides relaxation of rules in certain ~~cases~~ circumstances. (Tayyammum, shortening & combining of prayers).

Surah Al-Baqrah

"... Allah intends for you ease &
does not intend for you hardship..."