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Topic: **What is Islam; Elaborate the Salient Features of Islam?**

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What is Islam; Elaborate the Salient Features of Islam?

1. Introduction:

"Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam." (Quran 3:9)

The word Islam means submission, and subjugation and peace. Whereas the literal meaning of Islam is "to submit," "to yield" and "to surrender". Imam Raghaib-al-Isfahani (d. 1108) in his book al-Mufradat Fi Gharaib-al-Quran says: "Islam, in law, is of two kinds: One is a simple confession with tongue, the other is that along with

confession, there is belief in heart and a fulfillment in practice and resignation to God in whatever he brings to pass or decrees." In short, Islam is the submission to moral imperatives of Allah and peace with his creations Revealed to Prophet (PBUH) over 1400 years ago. Islam gave a complete code in moral, social, economic, political, national and international affairs. Islam addresses the individual and collective needs of mankind for all times.

2. Foundation of Islam

The foundation of Islam consists of five essential pillars such as:

- a: Shadah (Faith)
- b: Salah (Prayer)
- c: Zakat (Charity)
- d: Sawm (Fasting)
- e: Hajj (Pilgrimage)

These five pillars are an integral part of Islam, without practising them,

one can-not become a proper muslim. However, apart from the fundational pillars, there are certain essential beliefs in Islam that are also prerequisite of Islam. They are as under:

- i: Belief in Allah (Tawheed)
- ii: Belief in the Finality of Prophethood
- iii: Belief in angels
- iv: Belief in revealed books
- v: Belief in the day of judgement.

3: **Salient** Features of Islam:

To understand Islam, one must understand the salient features of Islam such as:

a: **Unity of God (Tawheed)**

The fundamental principle of Islam revolves around the Tawheed.

In the core of Islam, the doctrine of the oneness of Allah establishes the rock-solid idea of ethical monotheism.

and rejecting all the forms of polytheism and associating partners with God. Even Allah says in Quran:

"

Say, he is Allah, the one"

(Quran 112:1)

b: Universality and Timeless:

The message of Islam revealed upon the Prophet (PBUH) over 1400 years ago still contains the attraction to change the hearts of the people. It is not confined to a specific time, era, race or geography; however, it is for the whole humanity. In this regard, Quran presents the words of Allah as:

"And we have not sent you [O Muhammad] except as a mercy to the world."

(al Quran 21:107)

c: Balance between Deen and Dunya:

Islam promotes moderation. It does

not encourage complete withdrawal from worldly affairs, nor does it promote materialism. The balance between deen and dunya is a subtle principle of Islam. According to some scholars,

"Islam is the religion of traders, but with it allows worldly trade but with fair dealings. However, the Deen still remains the integral unit of Islam. Allah has revealed for his people in Quran:

"And seek in that which Allah has given you that home of the hereafter, and do not forget your share of the world." (al Quran 28:77)

d, Social Equality and Justice:

Islam in its true sense, ensures justice for all regardless of social class and ethnicity. The Holy book Quran also promotes social justice.

"Indeed, Allah commands you to render trust to whom they

are due and when you judge
between people, to judge with
justice." [Al-Quran 4:58]

Moreover, Al-Azhar University's Dr Wasiullah
Muhammad Abbas wrote in his book, ^{ee}key
Features of Islam:

^{ee}
"In actual, Islam is the practice
of social services."

i: Tolerance and Peace:

Islam is the religion of peace
and tolerance. Despite misconceptions,
Islam advocate peace and forbids from
compulsion in religion. The verse of
Al-Bakra makes it crystal and clear:

"There is no compulsion in
religion, the right path has
become distinct from the
wrong." [Al-Bakra 258]

Moreover, the life of Prophet (PBUH) is

full of examples for the followers. Once when a woman used to throw garbage on our beloved Prophet, and one day when she became ill, the Prophet PBUH went her home and prayed for her well being. This is the message of tolerance that the Prophet PBUH gave his followers.

f) Emphasis on Knowledge and Reason:

Islam promotes education and reflection. The first word of the Quran is "Iqra" (read). The prophet PBUH said that seeking education is obligatory to every man and woman. Allah says in Quran;

"Are those who knew equal to those who do not know?" (al Quran 9:59)

Moreover, according to Maurice Bucaille:

"Islam teaches that God has given man reason and therefore expects

man to reason things out objectively and systematically for himself."

-Maurice Bucaille, The Quran and Modern Science.

9: Economic System and Prohibition of Exploitation:

Islam has a diversified economic system. However, it strictly condemns riba (interest) and hoardings. It has also announced severe punishments for those, who engages in hoarding and riba. On the flipping hand, Islam enforces Zakat and encourages charity.

In this regard, the quranic verses are a beacon of light such as:

"Allah has permitted trade and forbidden interest." [al-Baqara 3:159]

10: Political System, Shura and Accountability:

Shura (consultation) is the core of Islamic political thought; therefore, it

promotes consultation. In the same token, Islam held the leader of an Islamic state and society accountable and answerable to the people. The holy Quran sheds light on the matter of shura in the third chapter of the Quran:

"And consult with them in your affairs, then when have decided, put your trust in Allah." [Al-Imran 159]

I: Human Rights and Dignity:

According to Islam, all the human beings are equal irrespective of their race, colour and geography. It regards the human life as sacred. Allah says in Quran:

"Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land. It is as if he had slain mankind entirely." [Al-Quran 5:32]

In this regard, the last sermon of Prophet PBUH is a prime example. The Last Prophet of Allah emphasized on the rights of human. He said:

"All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab and a non-Arab has no superiority over an Arab."

In the same way, he also condemned racial supremacy by stating

"No white has superiority over a black, and no black has a superiority over a white except by piety (taqwa) and good action."

Allah also says in Quran:

"certainly, he has honoured the children of Adam." [Israel 17]

4. Comparison between Islam and Other Religions:

While Christianity and Judaism also share common prophetic roots with Islam. Islam completes and perfects the monotheism belief through the finality of prophethood in Muhammad PBUH. Unlike other systems, Islam provides a complete social, political and legal framework based on the divine wisdom; Allah says in Quran:

Today, I have perfected for you your religion and completed my favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion."

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيَتْ لَكُمْ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا . [al-Maida 5:3]

5. Conclusion:

Islam offers a balanced and complete way of life guided by divine principles. The message of Islam is not

only specified by individual
purification, but also contains a
complete code for social justice.
In an age of moral confusion,
economic exploitation and spiritual
emptiness. Islam presents a
universal, timeless and peaceful
system for the success of
humanity in this world
and hereafter.