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Assignment :

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

A) INTRODUCTION :

More than 14 centuries ago, in the deserts of Arabia, a message was proclaimed that transformed individuals, reformed societies, and built a civilization whose light reached the farthest corners of the Earth. That message was Islam - the final complete guidance revealed by Allah to humanity through the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh). Islam is not confined to private devotion or ritual formality; it is a comprehensive divine system that integrates belief, worship, morality, law, governance, economics and social conduct. As Maulana Maududi aptly wrote, Islam is "not merely a collection of moral rules or rituals of worship, but an all embracing way of life that aims at building character, shaping society, and guiding nations." Unlike man made ideologies limited by culture or time, Islam is eternal, universal and divinely preserved, addressing the human journey from birth to death, private conscience to public law and personal virtue to global justice.

DERIVATION AND MEANING OF ISLAM :

The word Islam is derived from the Arabic root S-L-M, connoting peace, safety, purity and submission. Literally, Islam means to surrender or submit. Contextually, it adds up to surrendering one's will to Allah. In Shar'iah, it was said that it's voluntary submission and surrendering to the will of Allah. The Quran affirms: "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (2: 256) and "Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam." (3: 19). The Prophet (Pbuh) defined Islam "To testify that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; to establish prayer, to pay zakah, to fast in Ramadan and to perform hajj if able." (Sahih Muslim). Imam Ghazali described Islam as a combination of rights of Allah and people, while Maulana Sadar Ismaili in his book Islam at a glance described it as a combination of faith and worship.

CORE BELIEFS (AQIDAH) :

The structure of Islam stands upon its creed (aqidah), which establishes the ~~intellectual~~ intellectual and spiritual foundation of the faith. At their heart is tauhid, the absolute oneness of Allah & (Quran 112: 1-4). Imam Taymiyyah

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explained tauhid as not merely acknowledging Allah but affirming his sole right to be worshiped and obeyed. The second belief is in Angels, beings of light who execute Allah's commands without error (Quran 66: 6), recording deeds and delivering revelations - a reminder, as Imam Ghazali notes, of the unseen realities shaping human life. The third belief is in revealed books, including Torah, Zabur, Injil and Quran, the final preserved revelation: "Indeed it is We who sent down the Quran, and indeed, We will be its guardian." (15: 9). Imam Shatibi viewed this preservation as the divine guarantee of guidance for all time. The fourth is belief in prophets, all of whom called to monotheism and righteousness. Also the belief that Muhammad (Pbuh) is the last prophet and seal of prophethood (Quran 33: 40). The fifth belief is in the Last Day, which ensures moral accountability: "Whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it" (99: 7-8). Ibn Khaldun saw this as a safeguard of society, curbing injustice and corruption. Finally, belief in divine decree (Qadar) affirms that all things occur by Allah's will and wisdom (54: 49), while Imam Tahawi explained, human remain responsible for their choices. Together, these six beliefs create a complete

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waldview that unites conviction with moral responsibility, anchoring the believer in certainty and purpose.

PILLARS OF ISLAM :

The five pillars of Islam make that faith manifest in practice. The Shahadah, is a covenant of loyalty, affirming Allah's sovereignty and Prophet (Pbuh) as his final messenger. Salah, the five prayers, organises life around moments of worship, restraining immorality and wrongdoing (29:45); Imam Ghazali described it as "the ascent of the believer to the divine presence". Zakah, the obligatory alms, purifies wealth and institutionalises social justice by redistributing resources to the poor, needy, and indebted as specified in Quran (9:60). Sawm in Ramadan disciplines the soul, cultivates empathy and deepens God-consciousness, in line with the Quranic aim: "So that you may attain taqwa". (2:183). Hajj, the pilgrimage to Makkah, is required once in a lifetime for those able, serving as a living demonstration of Muslim unity and equality (Quran 22:27-28). These pillars ensure that faith is not an abstract idea but a disciplined way of life, internalised in the heart and enacted in the world.

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SALIENT FEATURES OF ISLAM :

A foremost and foundational feature of Islam is Tauhid, the belief in oneness of Allah in His essence, attributes and actions. The Quran declares : "Say : He is Allah, One ; Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor ~~begotten~~ is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent" (112 : 1-4). This doctrine rejects all forms of polytheism and superstition. Yusuf al - Qaradawi observes, tauhid is "the axis around which all of Islam revolves."

Closely connected to Tauhid is the belief in Prophethood (Risalah), the channel through which divine guidance reaches humanity. All prophets, from Adam to Muhammad (Pbuh), conveyed the same essential message of monotheism and moral righteousness. The Quran confirms : "We sent to every nation a messenger, [proclaiming], 'Worship Allah and avoid false gods'" (16 : 36). The Holy Prophet (Pbuh), however, is the Seal of Prophets (Khatim - al - Nabiat) (Quran 33 : 40), sent not to one but to all of mankind.

Another defining feature of Islam is its recognition of the Dignity of Mankind. The Quran proclaims : "We have honored the children of Adam" (17 : 70), affirming intrinsic human

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wath regardless of race, color, class or nationality". This principle is further affirmed in "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know each other. Indeed the most noble of you in sight of Allah is most righteous of you." (49:13). Imam Ghazali identified the preservation of life, dignity and honor as among the primary objectives of Shariah. Consequently, the unlawful taking of life is treated as a crime against all humanity: "Whoever kills a soul... it is as if he has killed all mankind" (5:32).

Islam is also characterized as a Complete Code of Life (Shumuliyat al-Din) encompassing spiritual, personal, social, economic and political dimensions. In individual life, guidance begins from the moment of birth - the adhan is recited in the newborn's ear, symbolizing the primacy of faith. The upbringing of children is moral duty, emphasizing education, character building and discipline. The Prophet (Pbuh) said: "The most perfect of believers in faith are those with the best character" (Tirmidhi). Lawful earning is a religious obligation: "Seeking lawful sustenance is a duty after the duty" (Bayhaqi). Islam

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integrates physical and mental health with spiritual well being. In family life, marriage is a solemn covenant of tranquility, love and mercy (Quran 30:21), where spouses are garments to one another, protecting and supporting each other (Quran 2:187). In collective life, Islam establishes a social system rooted in compassion and justice; a political framework based on consultation and accountability. In global affairs, Islam encourages peaceful coexistence, fulfils treaties and prohibits aggression while regulating war fare with strict moral limits: "Fight in the way of Allah those fight you but do not transgress" (2:190).

A further salient feature is that Islam Promotes humanity in the most comprehensive sense. It safeguards human rights, guaranteeing life, property, honor and freedom of belief (Quran 2:256). It affirms animal rights, prohibiting cruelty and considered kindness to animals as charity, as in famous hadith of a woman forgiven for giving water to a thirsty dog (Sahih Bukhari). It demands environmental stewardship; condemning wastefulness (Quran 7:31), prohibiting exploitation of natural resources and regarding planting a tree as charity.

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Social solidarity is embedded through Zakat, Sadqah and Waqf. Providing medical services is considered communal obligation.

SUPREMACY OF ISLAM

The supremacy of Islam lies in its divine origin, universal scope, unaltered preservation, and timeless applicability to every era. Allah declares: "It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to make it prevail over all religions" (9:33). Imam Mawardi notes that this universally equips Islam to guide both spiritual and worldly affairs.

A hallmark of its supremacy is its comprehensiveness (shumaliyat), integrating spiritual, moral, social, political, economic and intellectual life into a unified divine framework. The Shariah, as Maulana Maududi emphasizes, does not separate religion from public life but guides and safeguards it.

Justice is another pillar of its supremacy, established as a divine command. Quran instructs believers to "stand firm for justice, even against yourselves" (4:135) and forbids letting hostility lead to injustice (Quran 5:8). Imam Tayimiyyah argued

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that a just non-muslim state may endure but an unjust muslim state cannot.

Islam's supremacy is also reflected in balance and moderation (wasatiyyah). The Quran describes Muslims as a "middle nation" (2:143), avoiding both extremes of unrestrained indulgence and rigid asceticism.

Ultimately the supremacy of Islam is anchored in its universality, justice, balance, intellectual vibrancy and adaptability. ✖

CONCLUSION:

Islam, in its derivation and meaning, is submission to Allah that brings peace through faith, worship and righteous action. Its supremacy is grounded in its pillars and creed, combining pure monotheism, disciplined devotion and social justice in a universal, preserved framework. Its salient features - tauhid, prophethood, human dignity, complete guidance for individual, family and collective life, and a humanitarian ethos encompassing rights, environmental care and moral excellence - prove that Islam is not a fragmented ritual system but a divine order. As Maududi notes, it is a movement to reform the individual, build the family, organize society and guide nations.

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