

Assignment.

What is Islam? Elaborate the salient features of Islam.

Islam is derived from an Arabic word which means submission, surrender and obedience. As a religion Islam stands for complete submission and obedience to Allah. The motto of Islam is clearly expressed in the Holy Quran:

"Well-being in this world, well-being in the hereafter."

(Quran 2:201)

Islam does not encourage extremism of either school - the ultra-spiritualists (those who want to renounce all worldly things and mortify themselves as a duty) and ultra-materialists (those who do not believe in the rights of others). Islam shows an intermediate path to develop the body and soul simultaneously, thus creating a harmonious equilibrium in man as a whole.

Islam means complete submission not only in belief and mode of ibadat but also in ethics and morality, politics, in culture, social behavior, laws, economics,

national and international affairs in individual and collective manner.

Salient Features of Islam

The salient features of Islam include belief in one God (Allah), the prophethood, the divine revelation, the Day of Judgement and the importance of worship, morality and social justice. It emphasizes unity of mankind before God and equality with a strong focus on worship, prayer, fasting, charity (Zakat) and pilgrimage (Hajj).

1. Tauheed - The Essence of Islam

Tauheed is the core principle of Islam which emphasizes the belief in one God, Allah, who is the sole creator and sustainer of the universe. It is expressed in the primary Kalima of Islam as La Ilaha Illallah. "There is no deity but Allah." Tauheed is the first pillar of Islam. The Holy Quran says in Surah Nisa verse 48:

'And He (Allah) does not forgive the joining of partners with Him.'

2. Prophet hood

Prophet hood is the third article of faith in Islam. In Arabic, it is known as Risalah which literally means Apostleship. In technical terms, it means the office of an Apostle or a Prophet who is sent by Allah to convey His divine injunctions. Allah says in the Holy Quran Surah Nisa Verse 80:

'Whoever obeys Messenger has truly obeyed me'

Whatever is taught by a Prophet is on Allah's behalf, he says nothing on his own. Muslims also believe in the finality of prophet hood as Holy Quran says

'Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, and is the Messenger of Allah and seal of the Prophets.'

(Quran 33:40)

3. The Divine Revelation

Another salient feature of Islam is belief in the Holy Quran, the final and complete revelation of God's word, as well as Sunnah, the practices and teachings of the Holy Prophet

(PBUH). The Muslim believes that the Glorious Quran is the final, the best and uncorrupted of all these books. The Muslims also believe in and follow the authentic Apostolic traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Allah Almighty has sent the Scripture in truth to judge between people in matters wherein they differed. It is said in the Holy Quran in Surah Al-Hadid verse 25:

'Indeed, We sent our Messengers with clear proofs, and with them We sent down the Scripture and the Balance of Justice so that people may administer justice. And We sent down the iron with its great might, benefits for humanity and means for Allah to prove who is willing to stand up for Him and His messengers without seeing Him.' Surely Allah is Almighty, All-Powerful.'

4. The Day of Judgement

Belief in the afterlife is also an essential feature of Islam where individuals will be judged based

by God based on their actions in this life.

The life of man does not come to an end with his death. It continues ~~with~~ ^{after} his demise also. During the course of his life whatever a man is finished so far its material results are concerned, but its moral results still continue. In Islamic terms this day is known as the Doomsday.

Allah says in the Holy Quran in Surah Bazarah verse 254:

'O believers! Donate from what We have provided for you before the arrival of a Day when there will be no bargaining, no friendship or intercession. Those who do not believe are truly wrongdoers.'

5. Simplicity, Rationalism & Practicalism

Islam is without any mythology. Its teachings are simple and intelligible. It is free from superstitions and irrational beliefs. There is no concept of hierarchy of priests, no far-fetched abstractions and no complicated rites and rituals. Everybody may understand Book of God directly and translate its dictates into

practice.

Almighty Allah says in the Holy Quran (39:9) that those who have no knowledge are not equal to those who have.

Thus, Islam brings man out of the world of superstitions and darkness and initiates him into that of knowledge and light. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has said: 'He who leaves his home in search of knowledge walks in the path of God.'

6. Unity of Matter and Spirit

Another unique feature of Islam is that it does not divide life into water-tight compartments of matter and spirit. Islam stands not for life-denial but life-fulfillment. Islam does not believe in asceticism.

In Holy Quran Allah says:

"Ask, 'O Prophet!' who has forbidden the adornments and lawful provisions Allah has brought forth for His servants. Say, 'They are for the enjoyment of believers in this worldly life, and

they will be exclusively theirs on the Day of Judgement. This is how we make our revelations for people of knowledge'.

(Al-H'raf, 32)

Islam's teachings cater for the spiritual as well as temporal needs of man.

7. A Complete Code Of Life

Islam is not a religion in the common, distorted meaning of the word, confining its scope to the private life of a man. It is a complete code of life catering for all the fields of human existence. It provides guidance for all walks of human life - individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, national and international. The Prophet of Islam has said:

Everyone of one of you is a keeper or shepherd and will be questioned about every member of his fold. So the head of the state will be questioned about the well-being of

the people of his state. A man is shepherd of his family and will be answerable about every member of it. A woman is a shepherd of her husband's family and will be accountable for every member of it. A servant is a shepherd of his master and will be questioned about his master's property.

8. Humanism and Universality

The teachings of Islam are for the entire human race. God, in Islam, is the God of all the world (Qur'an 1:1) and its Prophet is the Messenger of whole of mankind. In the words of Qur'an

'O people! I am the Messenger of Allah to all of you'.
(al-Qur'an 7:158)

Islam's teachings are same for everyone whatever their colour, language, race and nationality. Islam addresses itself to the conscience of humanity and banishes all false barrier of race, status and wealth.

Historian Arnold J. Toynbee

writes in his book *Civilization on Trial* :

The extinction of race consciousness as among muslims is one of the outstanding achievements of Islam; and in the contemporary world there is, as it happens, a crying need for propagation of this Islamic value.

9. Permanence and Change

The elements of permanence and change co-exist in the human society and culture. The basic problems of life remain the same but the ways and means to solve them change with time.

Islam provides the concept of *Ijtihad* through which people apply divine guidance in accordance with the needs of their age. That is why Islam remains as fresh and modern as tomorrow's morn.

10. Complete Record of Teachings Preserved

Islam's teachings are available in their original form. The Quran, which has been in existence for the

last fourteen hundred years is available in original form. Detailed account of the life of the Prophet of Islam and his teachings are available in pristine purity.

These are some of the unique features of Islam that establish its credentials as the religion of man - the religion of today and the religion of tomorrow.