

Q: What is Islam? Define its salient features.

Introduction:

Islam is one of the major religions in the world, founded on the teachings of Holy Prophet PBUH and the divine revelations by Allah Almighty.

In today's world, Islam has more than 1.8 billion followers, known as Muslims.

Islam guides a person from the day of his birth till the time, he is buried in a grave, which will be later discussed in its salient features. The guidances by Islam under its various sources such as Quran, Sunnah of the Holy Prophet, have contributed effectively to maintain prosperity, honesty, equality, and transparency in the society.

What is Islam?

Islam is a monotheistic religion and a universal deen. Islam is an

Arabic word, firstly used in Quran, suggesting the meaning of submission, peace, and surrender. Additionally, the contextual meaning of Islam is to enter in peace by submitting to the will of Allah. Islam has been enlightened by Quran, in Chapter 2 verse 256, "Let there be no compulsion in religion, for the truth stands out clearly from falsehood. So whoever renounces false gods and believes in Allah <sup>has</sup> certainly grasped the firmest, unfailing hand-hold. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing."

Moreover, Holy Prophet PBUH has defined Islam as the combination of two factors. Firstly, to bear witness of Allah and his messenger. Secondly, to practice the pillars of Islam. Islam can further be defined as the rights of Allah, and the rights of People, as suggested by Imam Ghazali.

The shining side of Islam is that it is not limited to a specific geography, not confined to a specific ethnicity, nor it

is limited only to its followers, but Islam provides an ideal system of living for all of mankind. Its example can be seen in Chapter 5 verse 32 of Holy Quran, where it is said that "Who so ever saves a person, saves entire mankind, and who so ever kills a person, kills the humanity".

Hence, this discussion shows that Islam is a complete deen and no doubtly it provides a complete code of life.

### Salient Features of Islam:

Islam, as a deen, has very interesting, logical, and unique features which will be discussed below.

#### 1. Tawhid:

Tawhid is the central tenet of Islam, which asserts the absolute oneness of Almighty Allah. Muslims believes that, Allah is eternal, and only sustainer of the universe, as Chapter 112 verse 2 of Quran says, "Allah - the sustainer needed by all".

Moreover, this belief is strongly articulated in the first part of Kalma, which says, "There is no god but Allah." This belief further becomes strong by Chapter 112 verse 1 of Quran which says, "Say, O Prophet, He is Allah - One and indivisible."

According to Hadith of Holy Prophet, written in book "Sirat-ul-Nabi" by Allama Shibli Noumani, where Holy prophet says, "Tauheed is the first chapter of Islamic syllabus".

## a. Belief in Prophethood:

The second most greater feature of Islam is to belief in Prophethood followed by the belief in the finality of Prophethood on Holy Prophet Muhammad PBUH. The finality of prophethood stands prominent as it is also the second part of Kalma. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH is final prophet and is seen as the seal of the prophets. In Chapter 33 verse 40, Quran says, "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but is the messenger of

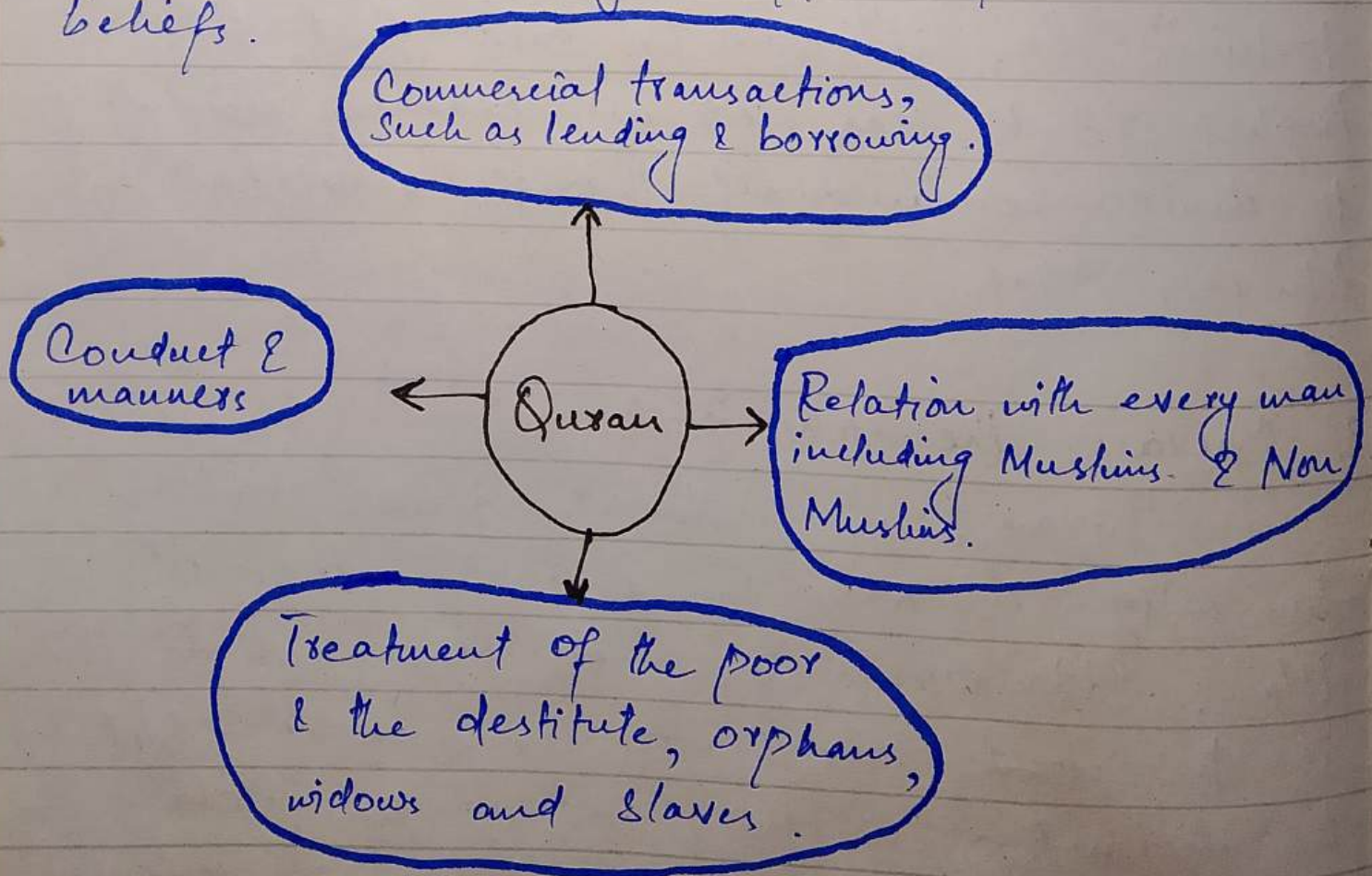
Allah and the seal of the prophets. And Allah has perfect knowledge of all things."

The life of Prophet Muhammad PBUH has led the humanity to an exemplary way of life. The words and actions of the Prophet PBUH are also the primary source of Shariah, and his actions are known as Sunnah. In Chapter 53 verse 3, Quran says, "Nor does he speak of his own wisdom", and further in Chapter 53 verse 4, it is said, "It is only a revelation sent down to him". So, it can be said that Holy Prophet PBUH has set an example according to divine commandment through revelation by Almighty Allah.

### 3. Quran: The Holy Book:

Quran, an ultimate guide to humanity is also a major feature of Islam. However, some of other religions in the world also got divine books, but the distinguishing factor is that the Holy Quran is the only book without alterations,

and it is in its purest form. The Holy Quran can be said as a book of principles, directions, admonitions, commands, warnings, and advices. Reading Quran provides information to the mind, and peace to the heart. According to Hadiths in Sahih Muslim, "Read the Quran, as if comes on the day of judgement as healer (shafi) to its companion." So, it can be said that Quran is the basic pillar of Islam and major support of Muslim's beliefs.



#### 4. Belief in Angels:

The belief in angels is the core requirement of Muslim faith.

The angels have been created by Almighty Allah to worship him, and to establish communication between man and Allah.

In Chapter 2 verse 34, Quran says, "And when we said to the angels to prostrate before Adam, so they prostrated, except for Iblis. He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers." This verse further clarifies the concept and strengthen the belief of Muslims in angels. Moreover, as the angels also played as a communicators between Allah and his man, so the celestial messenger, who brought revelations to the prophet Muhammad PBUH, is called Gabriel, which etymological means "the power of God".

In a hadith of Sahih Muslim, a person came to ~~ask~~ Prophet Muhammad, and asked various questions of Islam, which were answered by the Prophet. When that

man returned, Prophet asked Umar that who he was, and Umar replied "Allah and his messenger know best." The Prophet said, "Verily, he was Gabriel who came to teach you your religion".

The Quran also cites Michael, without indicating his functions. Thus, it shows that belief in angels is a core feature of Islam.

## 5. Belief on the Day of Judgement and the life here-after:

Islam teaches that all humans will be resurrected on the day of judgement, where they will be judged by Allah based on their deeds.

Those who lived righteous lives, following Allah's guidance, will be rewarded with Paradise, while those who reject faith or lived sinful lives will face repentance in Hell. In addition, Islam suggests a life after death implies a state of existence which begins with death, but a complete manifestation of which takes place



later, when the fruits of actions done in this life will take their final shape.

Qur'an, in Chapter 2 verse 4 says, "And also have perfect faith in the here after".

Moreover, the Hadith, according to Al-Bukhari and Muslim says, "O Allah, there is no true life but the life of the here after".

So, this feature of Islam and belief in Akhirah encourages Muslims to live moral and righteous lives, constantly seeking forgiveness from Allah.

#### 6. Islam; as a promoter of Humanity:

Islam has, from its first day, been focused on unity of humanity and it also recognizes human diversity and give valuable principles to deal with ethnic, social, and religious differences in ~~the~~ society.

Islam promotes humanity by advising its followers to have a good character, and to do charity as well.

According to the Hadith, "The perfect among the believers are those, who are best in

character." Similarly, as modern world has recognized that Charity is Humanity, Islam, various centuries ago, in chapter 2 verse 177, Quran says and I quote that righteous are those who believe in other commands of Allah; and do charity out of their cherished wealth to the poor and needy ones. Along with these all basic needs of the society, Islam has also focused on environment as well. According to Hadith, "There is none amongst the believers who plants a tree, or sow a seed, and then a bird, or a person, or an animal eats thereof, but it is regarded as having given a charitable gift."

## 7. Jihād (Struggle):

The concept of Jihād means to strive or to struggle in the way of Allah. Jihād can take various forms, starting from personal spiritual struggle against one's own desire, which is also known as the greater Jihād.

Secondly, striving to improve society, uphold justice, or defend against oppression.

However, speaking a word of truth to an oppressive ruler is a jihad, and a worship. The Prophet said, "A single endeavour of fighting in Allah's cause in the forenoon or in the afternoon is better than the world and whatever is in it."

## 8. Shariah (Islamic Law):

Shariah is a fundamental and defining aspect of Islam. In Islam, Shariah refers to the body of Islamic laws that governs not just legal issues but also ~~the~~ all the aspects of one's life, offering guidance on ethics, morality, personal conduct, and social justice. The Shariah Law is derived from the Quran, and the Hadiths, making it a unique religious legal system in the world. Shariah, under these sources, provide the principles and directives for how a Muslim is expected to live their life in accordance with Allah's will. According to

Ibn Taymiyyah, "The Shariah is the source of all true justice and the protection of rights. Without it, neither justice nor rights can be preserved."

### Conclusion:

To conclude, Islam is a faith that under its unique and flawless features guides Muslims and other humans as well with their relationship with Allah and other human beings and the world around them.

It can be said as a religion that emphasizes peace, justice, and mercy while promoting a sense of unity and responsibility within the global community.