

1. What is Islam? Elaborate the salient features of Islam.

Islam:

The word Islam originates from Arabic roots. It literally means submission for the sake of peace. It also refers to surrendering one's will and entering a state of peace & security.

Contextually, Islam represents complete submission to Allah's authority, sovereignty and oneness. The idea of Islam requires a human to fully believe in the absolute authority of Allah and this should guide his faith, action and intentions.

According to Maulana Maududi: Islam is a revolutionary ideology and program intended to alter the social order of the world and rebuild it according to divine guidance.

In Quran Allah communicates to his messengers that "Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam".

At another point Allah says "And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him" thereby emphasizing on the importance of Islam as the divine religion.

Islam is a very broad concept encompassing not only an individual as its subject. Instead Islam must be understood as a unified and integrated system where belief, law, and morality operate together under divine authority.

Therefore, Islam represents a complete and divine system which not only guides humans towards a righteous path, but instructs justice for societies and peace, harmony and coexistence for states. It must be understood as an eternal reflection providing guidance on every aspect of human life.

### Salient features of Islam:

Although Islam is a very broad concept and covers every aspect of human life, below is a concentrated list of some of the key features of Islam.

#### 1. Tauheed: Belief in the oneness of Allah

Tauheed literally means one or represents a singular entity.

In Islam, Tauheed establishes the absolute unity, uniqueness, and sovereignty of Allah in

His essence, attributes and authority, making Him the sole object of worship and obedience. Perhaps, Tawheed is the first and the most crucial pillar of Islam.

Allah himself reiterates in Quran that "Allah is One, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent."

At another points, Allah says "And your God is one God, there is no deity except Him, the Most Merciful."

Building on the defined roots, Muhammad (SAW) explained that if Islam is a building, then Tawheed is the gate and no human can enter into this building without acknowledging the very existence of Tawheed.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has also announced the reward for believers by saying that whoever dies while knowing that there is no deity except Allah will enter Paradise.

Tawheed is a pivotal concept of faith yet its significance extends far beyond religion. It serves to establish equality among all human beings by declaring as the only Divine and Sovereign Authority. As far as religion is concerned, it functions as an ideological foundation for Islamic law, ethics and governance.

## 2- The finality of the Prophethood:

Since human existence on Earth, Allah has sent more than one hundred thousand prophets as his messengers. Prophets have worked to convey Allah's message to the mankind.

Islam requires its believers to acknowledge the importance of all the prophets. Yet Islam is incomplete if without completely believing that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is the last of all the messengers. And Allah's teachings and all the guidance has therefore been communicated to the mankind.

In Quran, Allah himself declares Muhammad (SAW) as the "seal of Prophethood".

declaring that Muhammad (saw) is not the father of any of your men but he is the messenger of Allah.

In fact, Muhammad (saw) also clearly told his Ummah that "There will be no prophet after me".

Therefore, Muslims are required to not only submit to the divine authority of Allah but admit the finality of Prophethood with Muhammad (saw). This helps them to protect their faith, walk on the righteous path, and escape the doctrinal fragmentation of humanity.

### 3. Islam: A complete code of Life

Islam is the complete and eternal faith. It covers every aspect of human life ranging from a human's relationship with God, to individual's life, the family system, how societies are meant to exist to governance, justice and equality among all human.

And to practically demonstrate, Muhammad (saw) is seen as a lived example. He, through his conduct and actions taught humans that how the teachings of Allah Almighty are required to follow and

the best and most practical solution to all of the problems that human's face.

In Quran, Allah tells mankind that "This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed my favor upon you?" This is probably an excerpt from the last revelation which is a part of Surah-al-Maida. And here Allah has completed the process of revealing Quran to Muhammad (SAW) and openly tells humanity that now you have complete access to all the theoretical version in the form of Quran and the practical demonstration in the form of Muhammad (SAW). Now it is an individual's choice to determine his pathway and walk to Jannah.

#### 4. The concept of Akhirah & Accountability:

The most aspect of Islam is its concept of Akhirah. It instructs its followers that this life is a moment towards an eternal transition. The real life will start after death, once on the day of judgement, Allah determines the Momin and will guide them towards their ultimate resting place, Jannah.

Perhaps, Islam put great emphasis on the accountability of human actions and announces the concept of reward and punishment. And Allah has verily promised great rewards for the believers. Allah declares himself "As the Master of the day of Judgement" and therefore "whoever does an atom's weight of good will see, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it to."

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) conveys to the people that the wise one is he who holds himself accountable and works for what comes after death.

For those who seek, there are great lessons. By establishing Akhirah and the concept of accountability, Islam has declared everyone equal in the divine court and people will be rewarded or punished on the basis of their action in this world.

### 5. Human Dignity & Equality:

As evidenced through all of the features discussed above, Islam put great emphasis on human dignity and equality.

It recognizes the inherent human ~~value~~<sup>worth</sup> and equality irrespective of their religion, race, gender, color, language and ethnicity.

Allah in Quran declares humans as the Supreme of all being and at another place says that "We have certainly honored the children of Adam."

And the only distinction is based on human actions as rectified by Allah Himself that "Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you." The same concept is reiterated by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in his farewell sermon where he declared no man has superiority over the other except for the one who is pious.

This is one of the most fundamental concepts introduced by Islam which demolishes all social hierarchies and establishes a system of just and fair society. Islam served to correct the evils and shortcomings before its advent while simultaneously establishing a whole new order for mankind.

In addition to these key primary features, Islam also extensively covers.

- > Adl or the system of justice
- > Balance & Moderation
- > Moral & Ethical system referred as Akhlaq
- > Social welfare & Economic Justice
- > Emphasis on Rationality & Knowledge.
- > Universality of Islam.

In a nutshell, Islam is a complete code of life governing every aspect of human life. Therefore, those who seek guidance should return towards Allah and the message conveyed through his last Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Only then humans can live upto an optimum orderly life and find eternal blessings in Jannah.