

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

Ans **Introduction:** Islam is the final and universal religion revealed by Allah Almighty through Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) for the guidance of humanity. It is not merely a set of rituals, but a complete and practical code of life, regulating every aspect of the individual's life.

**Meaning:** The word Islam is an Arabic word, derived from the root word "S-L-M", which means peace from which comes the word "ASLAM" which means he submitted, resigned himself.

**Literal meaning:** complete submission to the will of Allah Almighty.

**Contextual meaning:** To enter into peace by submitting to the will of Allah.

**Definition:** The Holy Quran describes Islam as

"There is no compulsion in religion, emphasizing that truth is distinct from falsehood."

(Surah Baqrah. (Chapter 2) Verse 256)

In Shariah Islam is defined as

"the voluntary submission of desires to the

## Will of Allah Almighty."

- The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon him) defined Islam as

"Islam is to testify that there is no God except Allah and Prophet Muhammad is the last prophet, to establish prayers, to fast in the Holy month of Ramadan, to offer charity and pilgrimage if a way is possible."

The renowned scholar Dr. Hamidullah describes Islam as

the monotheistic deen revealed upon prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)

**Concept of Islam:** Islam is a universal deen, revealed upon prophet Muhammad for the welfare of mankind. Islam is not confined to a specific territory or ethnicity; instead it is for all mankind. Allah says in the Holy Quran:

we have sent you as a mercy for all the world (Surah Al-Anbya verse 21:107)

- Islam is a divine Religion, revealed by Allah, unlike all other religions, it is not a product of human evolution or ideology.

Allah says in Holy Quran

If you are in doubt — produce a chapter like it. (Surah baqrah <sup>verse</sup> 2: 23)

- Islam is a ideal system of living. It provides a civilizational framework to function in the society. It covers all aspects including individuals, family, society, economy and governance.

Allah says in Holy Quran

We have sent down to you the book explaining everything. (Surah An Naht <sup>verse</sup> 16: 89)

**Salient Features of Islam:** Islam provides a balanced system for the guidance of humanity. The teachings of Islam are based on the Quran and sunnah. Its unique characteristics make it a practical and timeless religion.

- (1) **Tauheed:** the Foundational principle of Islam: Tauheed is one of the unique concepts of Islam, which determines the belief of the Oneness of Allah.

"الله واحد"

## "Allah is One"

3.

The core concepts of Tauheed are belief in Oneness of Allah, belief on its attributes, prayers and rituals. Associating a partner with Allah is considered as shirk.

Allama Shibli Naumani, has emphasised the importance of Tauheed in his seminal work as the foundational pillar of Islam and core message of all prophets.

- (2) **Prophethood:** Allah has not left the mankind without any ~~prophethood~~ guidance. He has sent his prophets and messengers for the guidance of humanity. Allah has sent prophets to every nation and the chain of prophethood ended with prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The prophets brought clear instructions to the mankind and provided examples of justice, honesty, compassion and patience. The Quran says: There was no nation without a messenger having passed among them (Surah Fahir 35: 24)

3. **Dignity to mankind:** Allah has honoured the mankind. he has recognised the human beings as superior of his creations. with inherent worth, responsibilities and rights. Islam promotes equality, rejects all form of racism, ethnicism or superiority, except on the basis of piety.

Allah says in the Holy Quran

We have honoured the children of Adam  
O mankind! we have created you from  
a single pair. (Surah Al-Isra Ayat 70)

It is also stated in Hadith as

"An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab  
nor a non-Arab over Arab except by piety."

4) **Complete Code of Life:** Islam is a complete code, governing all aspects of human life. It provides a universal moral code, teaches honesty, compassion, justice, reforms behaviour and addresses social, economic and political systems.

Allah says in Quran This day I have  
perfected your religion for you, and chosen  
Islam as your deen. (Surah Al-Maidah)  
verse 5:3

5) **Promotes humanity:** Islam It is one of the most remarkable feature of Islam, it emphasises upon humanity, compassion and universal welfare. Islam, promotes humanity by protecting rights, ensuring justice and giving charity. It fosters a society, where all rights and dignity of people are protected.

The Quran has emphasized upon the promotion of humanity

"Whoever kills a soul it is as if he killed all mankind and whoever saves a soul, it is as if he has saved all mankind"

(Surah Al-Maidah verse)

5:32

6) **Promotes protection of fundamental rights:** Islam has guaranteed the fundamental rights of human beings before the establishment of modern charters. It emphasises upon the right fulfilment of Rights of Allah and Rights of human beings. Islam also safeguards the rights of women, minorities and prisoners.

7. **Promotes Social Welfare:** One of the distinctive feature of Islam is the promotion of social work. In Islam, charity or social welfare is not only voluntary, but it is a moral duty of an individual to help others. Islam institutionalises the social welfare through zakat, sadaqah and Waqf. prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) engaged actively in the welfare of community.

**The Quran says**

"Allah commands justice, the doing of good and generosity to relatives"

(Surah An-Nahl 16:90)

8. **Promotes Animal Rights:** Islam is a universal religion safeguarding the rights of every living being. Islam prohibits the ill treatment of any animal, and encourages the ethical treatment of all living beings.

The Prophet Muhammad once reprimanded a person whose camel was thirsty

## 9. Protection of Environment: Islam

promotes the protection of environment.

The prophet Muhammad emphasised on the protection of environment by saying that,

"Planting a green tree is the best charity"

and Do not waste water, even if you are in a running stream.

## 10. Concept of Accountability and Doctrine of Hereafter:

Islam emphasises that human life is not limited to this world and Allah will reward those in the Afterlife, who has fulfilled all the requirements of Islam. It creates a sense of accountability in the individual that this world is temporary and success lie in the hereafter.

Allah says whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom of good will see it

(Surah Az-Zalzalah)

verse 99:7

## 11. Provides a balance between Spiritual and Material life.

Islam provides a balance between moderation and spirituality. On the one hand, it encourages the pursuit of lawful livelihood and on the other hand, it emphasises on the completion of spiritual obligations.

The Quran says

"Seek the Hereafter, but do not forget your share of this world" (Surah Al-Qasas, Verse 28: 77)

## 12. Flexibility of Islamic teachings: Islam is easy and flexible as it does not involve any complex rituals, <sup>or</sup> priesthood. It fosters a direct relationship between man and God.

The Quran says

"Allah intends ease for you and does not intend hardships" (Surah Baqarah <sup>verse</sup> 2: 185)

**Conclusion:** Islam has the most distinctive features, Not only it fosters a direct relationship between man and God, but it also establishes a relation between man to man. Islam is a complete, final and universal religion, professed by all prophets from Adam to Muhammad (peace be upon him). It provides a complete framework for human beings which makes it unique from other religion: