

ASSIGNMENT # 1

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Date: _____

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

ANSWER

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a religion of Peace which is not contemporary but has existed since Hazrat Adam. The message and teachings have been same only the shariat was different for different Prophets for different times. GOD completed his religion and revealed it on last prophet that is Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) As stated in Surah Maidah 5:3-4. Islam is a religion of peace and mercy. The verse 'In the name of ALLAH, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate' is at the starting of every Surah of Quran. This shows that Islam promotes mercy, kindness, humility and compassion. It also promotes justice as there are punishments for wrongdoers.

Meaning of Islam

Literal Meaning

Islam comes from the root word Arabic 'S-L-M' which means to surrender, to yield or to submit. Literally it means to give up one's self.

Contextual Meaning

Islam means to enter in peace by submitting to the will of GOD. In other words, to submit one's desires to will of GOD. According to Shariat Islam is voluntary submission of desires to will of GOD.

According to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) Islam is to bear witness of GOD and His Messenger. To practice the pillars of Islam such as Kalimah, prayer, fast, Zakat and Hajj.

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'Islam is a monotheist deen revealed upon the Holy Prophet (PBUH)' is the definition of Islam according to Dr. Hamidullah.

Famous scholar, Imam Liqazali says rights of GOD and rights of people is the name of Islam.

According to another scholar, Molana Sadaruddin Islahi Islam comprises of two things; faith and worships.

Concept of Islam.

(a) Submission in both Private and Public life.

Islam is submission of one's desires to the will of GOD. It provides individual with peace. Islam preaches to submit to GOD's will not only on private life such as beliefs and mode of worships but also in public life for instance; in morality, ethics, politics, economics, social, culture, national and international affairs. Submission in both capacity will not only provide peace and harmony in one's life but also in society.

(b) Freedom of Will.

Islam fundamental concept is that the whole universe is created by GOD and HE created for mankind. Those who believe are Muslims and those who do not are non-believers - Kafir. But there is no compulsion, there is freedom of will as stated in Surah Al Kaff 18:29
 "Whoever wants to, he should believe and whosoever wants, he should disbelieve."

(c) Islam fulfills the needs of mankind.

Mankind to survive needs two things; the resources to maintain life and the material needs of individual.

Society and secondly, the knowledge of principles of individual behaviour and society. Islam ^{GOD} fulfills both the needs. He has provided mankind with all nature resources and has sent Prophet with guidance and code of life.

② Practice in Individual and Collective lives

Islam does not separate private life and collective life. Islam gives teachings for both personal and public lives. It says the sovereignty of GOD must be establish in personal life as well as collective. Therefore, providing mankind with guidance in every walk of life.

Salient features of Islam

① Unique concept of Tauheed.

According to the Holy Prophet (PBUH), Tauheed is the first part of Kalimah. Tauheed is the oneness of GOD that is there is no GOD but ALLAH. This concept is further stated in Surah I Khlaf 112:1-4. Oneness of GOD is what separates Islam from other religions like Christianity and Hinduism. Tauheed is the core belief of Islam as all the faiths of Islam surrounds around it. Worship of Only ALLAH and if worship other than HIM then it is Shirk. All systems and rituals are from and towards HIM. for instance reciting of Azan in the ear of newborn. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said "Tauheed is the first chapter of Islamic Syllabus" as stated in Surah tun Nabi by Allama Shibli. Another saying of Holy Prophet (PBUH) in the book is "Islam is like a fort and the gate of that fort is Tauheed."

(B) Prophet hood

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Belief in Prophet hood is another feature of Islam. It is the second part of Kalimah. Belief is not only on the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) but also all prophets before him. He is the Last Prophet and there is no prophet after him. It is stated in Surah Ahzaab 33:40 "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men and but is the Messenger of GOD and the seal of Prophets". It teaches us the implementation of Shariah by following the way of life of Holy Prophet (PBUH) that is Sunnah. Therefore, Prophet hood is also a source of education for us. As said by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) "Verily I have been sent as a teacher to mankind". The Holy Prophet (PBUH) is also a source of rules and laws as it is evident from the fact that Shariah's sources are Quran and Sunnah. Therefore, following the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is following GOD's will as he does not speak from his own as stated in Surah Najm 53:3-4. It is evident from Surah Ahzaab 33:21, that Holy Prophet (PBUH) is a perfect role model for mankind.

(E) Dignity to mankind

Previous civilizations such as Greece, Romans etc did not give dignity to men unless he was from a certain class, caste, ethnicity. Poor were not given a full status and there was slavery. The rich were considered the most dignified. But Islam do not discriminate and gives dignity to all. All are same to GOD irrespective of color, race, ethnicity, creed, rich or poor. GOD has bestowed prestige on mankind by making them his Caliph on earth as mentioned in Surah Bqarah 2:30. Man is the Supreme being amongst all His beings as stated in Surah Tin 95:4. On another place in Quran, Surah Bani Israel 17:70, GOD talks about honouring the children of Adam. It means it is for all. No one can give either respect or disrespect to anyone except GOD as stated in Surah Ale Imran 3:26. Uni Plus

(d) Complete code of life

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Islam is a complete deen which gives complete code of life. It does not only provide guidances for man-to-God relations but also man-to-man relations. Hence, guides in every aspect of life. Guidance is provided for individual life for instance for upbringing of children, character building of an individual, how to obtain livelihood i.e. is halal-haram distinction. Further stresses to gain education regarding which the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said "seeking knowledge is obligatory for every muslim." Islam provides guidance on rights and duties of spouse, partners etc. Thus, providing guidance for each and every aspect of individual life. Furthermore, guidance is also provided for collective life. Advice is given regarding each system such as social, political, financial, justice and global affairs. Hence, a complete code of conduct.

(e) Islam promotes humanity.

Islam is a religion of peace which promotes humanity. Humanity means by birth natural instincts such as empathy, kindness, compassion, fulfillment of human rights, animal rights, and environment protection. Islam instructs its followers for character building and humane ^{emotions} ~~character~~ as stated in Surah Hijrat 49:13. With time, it is said that charity is humanity but Islam ^{already} delivered this message (Surah Baqarah 2:177) almost 1400 years ago. Islam gives great focus to medical service. It is mentioned in Surah Al-Maidah 5:32 "Whoever saves ^{a life} ~~one man~~, it will be as if they saved all of humanity." Further, one hadith-e-Qudsi is that God shows displeasure to a person, who never visits an ill person. Therefore, it is evident that Islam promotes humanity. The farewell sermon of Holy Prophet (PBUH) talks about human rights, women rights and rights of minorities.

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Thus, advocating for equality for all. Animal rights are also advised by Islam. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) reprimanded a person because his camel was thirsty. Islam also promotes environment protection. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said that planting a green tree ^{is the best charity.} ~~even if you are in place of war.~~ At another place he said to not cut down green trees even if you are in place of war. Hence, it is evident that Islam advocates for environment protection.

(f) Revealed Ideology.

Islam is not a man made religion. It is a divinely revealed on the Holy Prophet (PBUH). It is mentioned in the Quran in Surah An Nisa 4:105 which says that Quran is revealed on the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Thus, it implies that Islam is a perfect religion ~~free~~ which is free of flaws as it is the words of the GOD. Hence, making it unique from other religions.

(g) Islam promotes rule of law.

Islam is a religion of peace which promotes equality and justice. Sovereignty belongs to GOD and no one is above the Shariah. Same rules & laws apply to everyone irrespective of class, creed, color etc. It instructs its followers to hold justice even when the culprit is his parent as mentioned in Surah An Nisa 4:135. Islam advocates for a society where everyone is equal and punishments are based on the crime. Islam ^{allows} ~~give special~~ the non-muslims in a muslims society, to be govern according to their own religion. Hence, equality and justice prevails. It instructs its followers to observe rule of law irrespective of whoever is the wrongdoer.

(h) Concept of Dual Accountability

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Islam is a religion that have the concept of life here after. It tells its followers that this life is temporary and the life in hereafter is permanent. So the actions of an individual will be held accountable in this life as well as ~~on~~ the Day of Judgement. Thus, the concept of dual accountability as mentioned in Surah Al Isra (17: 13-14). It can be deduced that the dual accountability ~~not only~~ makes the individual to abide by the rules in life as he will be accountable for his actions in this life as well as on day of judgement.

(i) Unity of Matter and Spirit

A unique feature of Islam is that it does not divide life in two parts; matter and spirit. It does not stand for denial of life, but fulfillment of Islam. Islam do not believe asceticism. But instructs its followers to maintain a balance. that is to live life (both private and public) according to ways of Islam and every action is to be done ~~to~~ with the intention of getting GOD's blessing. It does not ask man to renounce the world and live in isolation worshipping GOD. But to face all the challenges and worship GOD. Thus, advocating for unity of matter & spirit.

(j) Promotes Simplicity, rationality and Practicality -

Islam is a religion without any mythology. Its teachings are simple and intelligent which are free from superstitions and irrational beliefs. The basic articles of faith and all others beliefs are based on logic and reason. All teachings and beliefs are simple and straightforward. There is no complicated rites & rituals nor abstractions. Everybody can directly study Quran and practice it. Islam put great focus on faculty of reason and intellect.

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Islam does not ask his followers to blindly follow but provides sound logic & reason behind every belief. Intellect is greatly appreciated and stresses upon for instance as stated in Surah Taha 20:114. Islam is a religion that pulls mankind out of the world of superstitions & into the world of knowledge & life light. Thus, Islam is a practical religion that promotes rationality.

(K) Islam is universal

The message of Islam is for the whole mankind. It is a universal deen because it guides us in every aspect of life. It is not limited to a specific time, nor confined to a specific geography. Also, it is not confined to a specific ethnicity. Hence, it for all times and for everyone. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) is not ^{a prophet} only for muslims but for the entire universe. As it is mentioned in Surah Al Araf 7:158 "O People! I am but a Messenger from GOD to you all".

(L) Teachings are preserved.

Another unique feature of Islam is that its complete record of teachings are preserved in their original form. The holy book, Quran is preserved as the responsibility of its protection is taken by GOD Himself as stated in Surah Al Hijr 15:9. Therefore, the words of GOD & its teachings are available to mankind without any adulteration of any kind. Even the sayings and records of life of Holy Prophet are handed down to us with precision & authenticity. So there is no doubt of edit and changes.

CONCLUSION

Islam is a religion of peace ~~that~~ ^{which} promotes equality and humanity. It requires the submission of one's desire to the will of GOD. But there is no compulsion in Islam. Islam possesses some unique features.

It is monotheism religion which is universal providing with ~~compr~~ guidance on complete ~~code~~ ^{way} of life. It is a religion of simplicity, rationality and practicality.

It requires unity of matter and spirit. It is a perfect religion with teachings that are in its original form.