

Islamiyat Assignment #01

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

Introduction:

Even with rise in Islamophobia in the world, Islam is the second largest population in the world with an estimated number of 2 billion followers - which constitutes to about 25% - 26% of the global world population. While the west has spent billions on Islamophobic propoganda yet we see many people around the world converting to or joining Islam. What could be the reason? or what is compelling them to do so? Well the answer lies in the the 'word' Islam itself. Knowing and understanding the word Islam could not only help outsiders what Islam stands for but it also has become an essential need for Muslims today to strengthen their (core) beliefs.

The word Islam can be interpreted from multiple point of views, let's discuss them below:

(1) Literal meaning of Islam

Islam is an Arabic word that literally means "submission", "surrender", or "obedience" to the will of God. It is derived from the triliteral root S-L-M (related to salam, meaning 'peace'), it signifies attaining peace through total submission to Allah. Hence a muslim is one who submits.

(2) Contextual meaning of Islam

Contextually, the word Islam would mean to enter in peace by submitting to the will of Allah. Many people including Muslims spend their whole lives running after fulfilling their desires. Their lives could be at a lot of peace if only they submitted their desires (submission of desires) to the will of Allah, which is the essence of the contextual meaning of Islam.

(3) From Islam/Shariah Point of View

From a Shariah perspective, Islam denotes the complete, 'voluntary submission', 'surrender' and obedience to the will of Allah, the Creator & Sovereign of the universe. The first source of Shariah is Quran. So in Quran it was clearly stated:

"There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion (Islam).

The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut (falsehood) and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold, which has no break. And Allah is All-Hearing & All-Knowing."

- (2: 256)

And the following verse of Surah Al-Kafirun (from Quran) also reflects this perspective/view:

"For you is your religion, and for me is my religion"

- (109: 06)

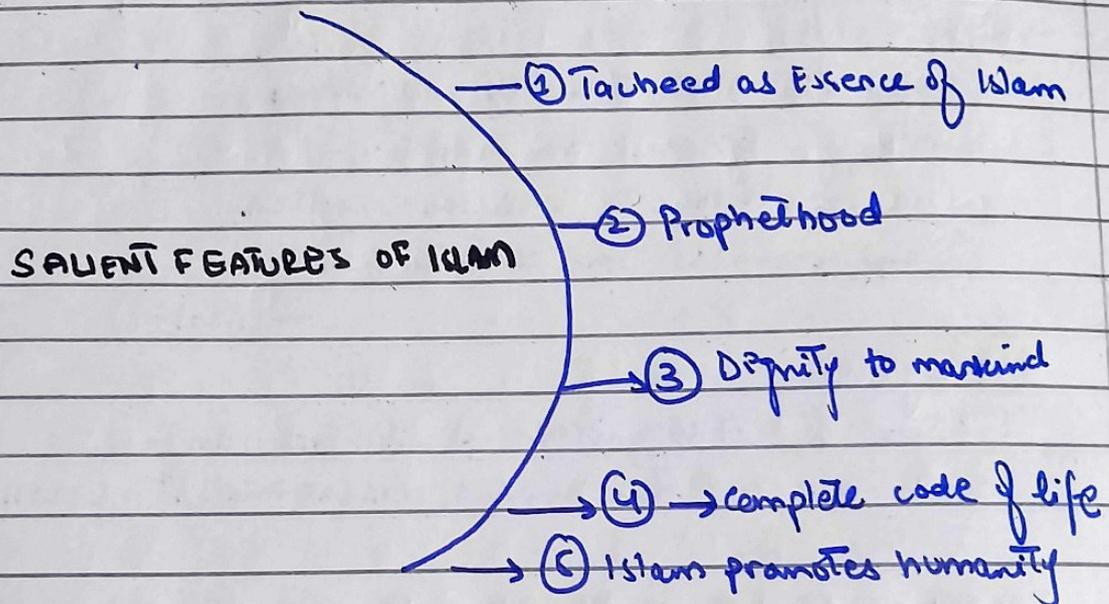
④ Scholars' Perspectives Regarding the meaning of Islam:

In his book "Introduction to Islam", Dr Hameedullah defined Islam as 'a monotheist deen revealed upon Prophet'. While Imam Al-Ghazali was of the view that 'Islam is combination of rights of Allah and rights of people.' In Maulana Saadruddin Islahi's thought, Islam is characterized as a seamless combination of faith (Makki period) & practical worship (Madani period). He views these not as separate stages, but as a unified evolution of Islamic message.

★ Islam is the way of peace & harmony. If we look around, we see that everything including the sun, the moon and the stars, the high hills and the mighty oceans are obeying a Law, the Law of Allah. We find no disorder or chaos in them. Superb harmony and perfect order is evident in the system of Nature. The sun rises in the East & sets in the West and there has been no change to this rule. The moon & stars shine at night. Day passes & night comes & so the process goes on. Everything has a set course which nothing can violate. They are made to obey Allah & have no choice but to obey. This is why we find eternal peace in the system of Nature. But, human beings are different: Allah has given us the knowledge & will to choose between right & wrong. Yet, He does not force us to obey Him. This is what's behind the word Islam - a concept that one has to submit but only at their own free will no forceful compulsions.

→ Salient features of Islam

Just knowing the meaning or concept behind a word cannot be enough to build up beliefs or to strengthen already established ones. One has to take a deep dive into the concept, idea or even religion to look for characteristics (features) that makes it more captivating for people to learn about. Islam also has certain salient features which are addressed subsequently:



1. Tauheed as Essence of Islam

Belief in the unity & oneness of Allah, Tauheed is the first & main principle of the Islamic faith. It is also the first part of the 'Kalimah' — لا اله الا الله، محمد رسول الله
A kalimah is a sacred declaration of faith in Islam that summarizes the core beliefs of a Muslim. It means that Allah is the Supreme Being, the Creator, Sustainer & Master of the universe, the Highest Authority & exclusively worthy of worship. The first Surah of the Holy Quran begins with words:

"Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and sustainer of the worlds." - (1:2)

Tauheed is the belief in Allah with all His powers. Allah is All-knowing, All-wise and All-powerful. He is the Merciful and the Kind. He is with us has no beginning and no end. He is the First and the Last. He has no partners of any sort in His attributes, powers, work & dominion. The Quran has laid the greatest emphasis on Allah's absolute Unity & Oneness. The concept has been summed up in Surah Ikhlas of the Holy Quran, which says:

"Say He is Allah, the one and only; Allah, the Eternal, the Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten. And there is none like unto Him"

- (112:1-4)

And again:

"There is nothing whatever, like unto Him and He is the one that hears & sees (all things)." - (42:11)

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, true tauheed is not just belief on tongue it must live in the heart & appear in actions, meaning recognizing Allah as the only real source of power, trust, & dependence in all matters.

Allah has created everything in the earth & heavens for the service of mankind. When a person surrenders himself to Allah's commands, he gains superiority over all the other creatures in the universe..

(2) Prophet hood:

The word prophet ('Nabi') denotes one who is very near to Allah through the total surrender of his entire being to Him and who receives revelations from Him which serve as a source of guidance for men. If the revelation is in the form of a scripture, the prophet is, in addition, a messenger 'Rasul' as well. Risalah is the channel of communication between Allah & mankind. Allah, in His infinite mercy has provided men with guidance to follow the right course and there will be great reward in the life after death for those who truly follow this guidance. As a muslim, one must believe in all the prophets & messengers.

The second part of the Kalimah emphasizes belief in the finality of Prophethood, as highlighted in the Quran:

"Muhammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] one messenger of Allah and last of the prophets. And ever is Allah, of all things, knowing."
- (33:40)

Our way of life, therefore, should be guided by his teachings and practices also called "Sunnah" which serves as a practical blueprint for righteous living. In addition to spiritual guidance, education holds central place in Islam, as the Prophet himself stated, "Verily, I have been sent as a teacher," emphasizing the importance of knowledge & learning. Following the rules & laws revealed by Allah, as those mentioned in Quran:

"Your fellow man is neither misguided nor astray.
Nor does he speak of his own whims.
It is only a revelation sent down 'to him'.
-(53:2-7)

This verse ensures moral discipline and justice in society as it emphasizes that all the teachings regarding things are sent by Allah All mighty himself and they are not edited by the prophet. Moreover, Prophet Muhammad serves as an exemplary role model (Peer-e-Kamil), whose character, conduct, and decisions provide a living example for believers to mirror, inspiring both personal & communal transformations.

"Indeed, in the messenger of Allah
you have an excellent example for
whoever has hope in Allah & the
Last Day, & remembers Allah often."
-(33:21)

(3) Dignity to mankind.

Before Islam, many societies practiced severe injustices slaves were treated badly, daughters were undervalued & in the arabic period of Jahiliyah they were even buried alive the moment that they were born. In South Asia, caste system made lower castes such as Shudras face discrimination & social exclusion. Islam transformed this outlook by granting dignity & honour to every human being regardless of social status. The Quran declares that mankind has been appointed as Allah's Khalifa on earth.

"Verily, I am going to place a khalifa
on earth" - (2:30)

affirming human worth & responsibility. Surah At-Tin (95:7) emphasizes that humans were created in the best form, ~~the~~ while Surah Bari Israel proclaims, "certainly, we have honored the children of Adam" - (17:70)

This verse highlights the elevated status of all humanity. This concept establishes the superiority of human beings among Allah's creation and affirms that dignity belongs to all people not only Muslims but also minorities (transgender). It upholds the rights and respect of women & ensures honour for every individual regardless of gender or social position. Furthermore, the Quranic message

"You [Allah] honor whom You will
& You humble whom You will.

In Your hand is [all] good.

Indeed, You are over all
things competent."

- (03:26)

reminds believers that power & ~~has~~ honor ultimately belong to Allah, reinforcing equality & justice for all mankind.

④ Complete code of life:

Islam provides comprehensive guidance in every aspect of life, covering both individual & collective spheres. In individual spheres, life, guidance begins from birth, such as recitation of the adhan in newborn ears, and continues with the proper upbringing of a child through nurturing role of the mother, the family

environment, & spiritual development connected to mosque from an early age, as reflected in the teaching to instruct children in prayer by the age of seven. Character-building is shaped through the exemplary conduct of Prophet Muhammad, whose life is described as the best model for believers. Education is strongly emphasised, as he said, "Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every muslim," highlight the central place of learning. Islam also provides direction regarding lawful livelihoods.

"O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful & good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy." - (2:168)

and family relationships based on love & mercy, and the transmission of moral values from one generation to another. HA

In collective life, Islam establishes a complete framework for a society, a social system that ensures the rights of neighbours, as taught in hadith that 'a true believer in Allah & the Last Day shall honor his neighbor' - Sahih Al Bukhari: 6018, a political & administrative system based on justice & trust, a financial system promoting fairness and prohibiting exploitation, and a justice system ensuring equality & accountability.

O believers! stand firm for Allah and bear true testimony. Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just, that is closer to

righteousness. And be mindful of Allah.
Surely Allah is All-Aware of what
you do"

- (1:8)

Moreover, guidance is provided for global affairs to promote peace, cooperation, and justice among all people, as emphasized throughout the Quran.

② Islam promotes humanity

Humanity is defined by natural positive qualities such as love, peace, kindness and empathy, along with fulfilment and protection of human rights. Since 20th century the definition has expanded to include animal rights and environmental protection as proposed by organizations like 'United Nations' and activists like 'Greta Thunberg'. Islam strongly promotes humanity by emphasizing moral character and compassion, even listening sincerely to someone's pain can ease their burden, reflecting the spirit of **Surah Hujurat** and **Surah Al-Hamzah**, which guides ethical behavior. Charity is a central expression of humanity, as stated in the Quran,

“Rather, the righteous are those who believe in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Books, and the prophets; who give charity out of their cherished wealth to relatives, orphans, the poor, 'needy' travellers, beggars...”

- (2:177)

and charity may even be enforced for social justice, as demonstrated by 'Hazrat Abu Bakr' doing

(his Caliphate), who upheld the obligation of zakat to ensure welfare for society, especially relatives and the needy, showing charity begins at home. Islam also gives importance to medical service and the protection of life, as saving one life is like saving all of humanity (5:32), while teaching encourages visiting & taking care of the sick & vulnerable persons. Social service is regarded as a defining feature of Islam, as highlighted by **Al-Azhar University** scholar **Wahidullah M Abbas**, who describes service to humanity as a key Islamic value. The protection of human rights was powerfully affirmed in the 'Farewell sermon' of the Holy Prophet, which established dignity & equality for all.

Islam further promotes kindness towards animals, as the prophet reproached a man for neglecting his thirsty camel, and it also encourages environmental responsibility through teachings that planting a tree is an act of charity and that green trees should not be destroyed even during war, reflecting Islam's comprehensive view of compassion for all creation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Islam is a complete and balanced way of life that shapes faith, character, justice and compassion in both individual and collective spheres. It upholds dignity & rights of all human beings. Islam offers a universal framework for peace, equality, and moral excellence. Its clarity of belief and practical guidance naturally attract outsiders by appealing to reason & human conscience. At the same time, it strengthens the faith

the faith of Muslims by providing purpose, unity and spiritual certainty. Thus, Islam guides humanity toward justice, dignity, and success in this world & the hereafter.