

**QUESTION 01: What is Islam? Explain the Salient Features of Islam.**

**Understanding Islam - Definitions and Perspectives:**

**Literal Meaning:**

Islam means submission or to achieve peace, peace with God, peace within oneself and peace within creation of God. Islam is extracted from three Arabic letters S (س), L (ل), M (م) which constitutes different meanings when inter-connected including "submission", "surrender", "commitment" and "peace". Islam is a monotheist religion revealed on Muhammad Ibn Abdullah between 610 and 632 of the Common Era.

**Contextual Perspective:**

Islam is an Arabic term which means to submit one's will to the will of God. Islam is a monotheist religion that teaches that there is only one God and only one Supreme being on which we have faith. Muslims have faith: Allah is one and Islam is the complete religion which can be followed by humanity. The core concept of Islam is total submission to God.

**Islamic Perspective:**

From the Perspective of Shariah, Islam is the voluntary submission of one's desires to the will of God. Islam is the complete code of life.

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Islam teaches us in every aspect of life whether it's individual life or collective life. Islam has no stone left unturned as it teaches mankind in every area of life: moral, social, ethical, justice, legal, cultural, political and ethnic. Muslims have firm belief in the oneness of God.

**Islam from the Eyes of Scholars:**

Different scholars have narrated Islamic definition in their own words. Some of them are defined below:

**Prophet Muhammad (SAW):** Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W) has defined the Islam as to bear witness to Allah and his messenger. And then practice the pillars.

**Dr. Hamidullah:** He stated Islam as a monotheist religion revealed upon Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H).

**Imam Ghazali:** He explained Islam as the Rights of people and the Rights of Allah. As Quran also says about the fulfilment of rights of people along with rights of Allah.

**Molana Sador-ud-din Islahi:** He mentioned that Islam means to establish faith and worships. It is narrated that:

"Actions are judged by intentions and every person will receive a reward for what they intended".

(Sahih-al-Bukhari)  
Hadith 1

## Practice and Essence of Islam:

Prophet

Muhammad (P.B.U.H) narrated the core concept of Islam as:

"Submission means that you should bear witness to that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the God's Messenger, that you should perform the ritual prayers, pay the alms tax, fast during Ramadan and make the Pilgrimage of the House if you are able to go there."

## Islamic Perspective of Supreme Being:

In Arabic

The word Allah literally means God. Believers in Islam understand Allah as a proper name for creator as illustrated in Quran. Not only the Muslims, but the Christians and Jews also use the word God for the Creator which means they also believe in the mono-theist religion. Another reason maybe due to the English-speakers being accustomed to the word God. But the believers of Islam have true faith in the oneness of Allah and his messenger. The sacred book - Quran also has narrated the verses which shows the nature of God and also the

relation of God and its creation.

"Say: He is Allah,  
the One"

(Surah Al-Ikhlās, verse 1)

"Allah is he on whom  
all depends."

(Surah Al-Ikhlās, verse 2)

"And Allah brought you  
forth from the womb of  
your mother, not knowing  
anything and He gave  
you the sense of hearing,  
seeing and comprehending.  
And it is hoped that  
you would be Grateful."

(Surah An-Nahl, verse 78)

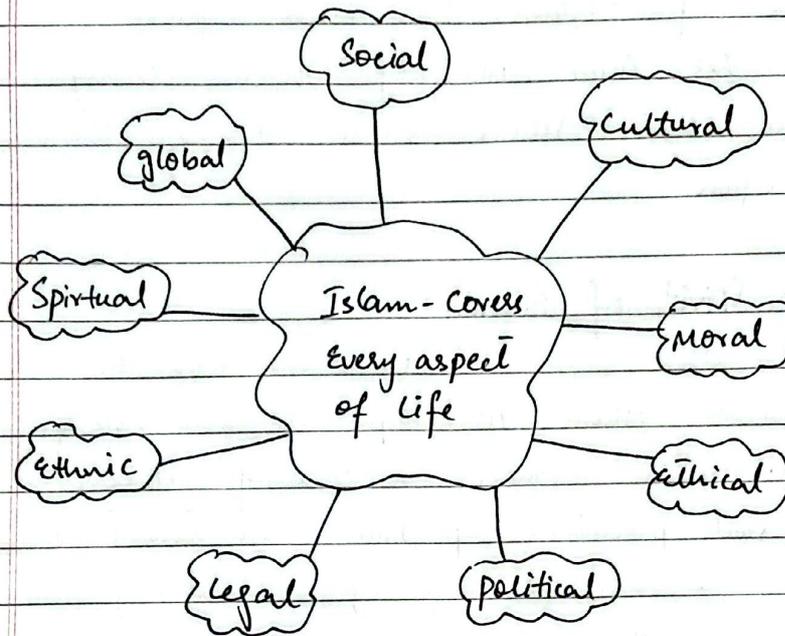
"Sense of seeing cannot  
comprehend him. He can  
comprehend the sense of  
seeing. And he is Al-Latif  
(the most subtle and curious),  
well-Acquainted with  
everything."

(Surah Al-Anaam, verse 103)

Muslims believe that there is no partner  
of God and Allah has multiple names  
of attributes. All of them are mentioned  
in Quran. Among them some includes  
the Most Merciful, the Most Gracious,  
the Most Forgiving, the Most High and  
everlasting among others.

## Islam as Religion of Truth:

Islam is a religion of truth. It is a complete code of life. It covers every aspect of life.



For a complete development of mankind, a human needs the following:

- Resources to maintain the individual and social needs.
- Knowledge of Principles of individual and social behaviour to enable self-fulfilment and to maintain justice.

The Lord of universe has provided mankind with both. To cater with material needs he has created the nature from which his creation take advantage and fulfil its needs. And for the vision to right path he has sent his Prophet who has guided mankind in every aspect of life.

## Islam as a divine Path:

The name of other religions are based on their founder such as Buddhism and some based on regions like Hinduism. But the name of "Islam" has been given by ~~Isl~~ Allah Almighty which clearly tells that Islam is a divine religion.

## True Spirit of Islam:

It is the time to re-discover Islam. As people are now making it according to their own ease forgetting the real preachings of Islam. We now have to argue our case logically, persuasively and correctly.

An ordinary reader would baffle when he reads the Divine assertion:

**"Prayers refrain from shameful and unjust deeds"**

(Surah al-Ankaboot, verse 45)

While seeing those who still have wrong doings even though they offer their ritual prayers five times a day. For those there is another saying:

**"It is Allah who has sent down the best message - a Book of perfect consistency and repeated lessons - which causes the skin and hearts of those who fear Allah to tremble,**

then their skin and hearts soften at the mention of mercy of Allah. That is the guidance of Allah, through which he guides whoever he wills. But whoever Allah leaves to stray will be left with no guide."

(Surah al-Zumar, verse 23)

### Message of Surah Al-Fatiha:

The divine assertions can never be wrong if only first seven verses of Surah-Al-Fatiha will be understood it would prove accuracy of statement. Indeed in the opening verse it is stated:

"Praise to Allah the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds"

This will revolutionized one's thinking. The word Rabb is used for the creator for which the translation of cherisher and sustainer is used but this is not as equal to the word Rabb which is more comprehensive. Allah tells us that he is the one who ~~gave~~ gives us food, protects us and fulfil our needs. He protects us from the birth to the cradle of death.

Also his love for the mankind is also mentioned. It is not only for Muslims but for his whole creation as he didn't mentioned anywhere to have the sword in hand and make the non-believers say kalma.

Indeed he said that:

If only one recites "Guide us along the Straight Path, Path of those You have blessed, not those you are displeased with or those who are astray." (Surah Al-Fāṭḥa, verse 6-7) with sincerity, it would prevent him from going astray.

## SALIENT FEATURES OF ISLAM

### Monotheism - Unique Concept of Touheed:

The basis preaching of Islam is to believe in one god and that there is no one except him. According to the definition of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) of Islam it is stated that:

"Islam is the first part of the Kalma."

As in Surah Ikhlas it is narrated that:

"Say: He is Allah the One,  
Allah the Eternal Refuge,  
He neither begets, nor is  
born nor is there to him  
any equivalent."

(Surah Al-Ikhlās, verse 1-4)

There is hadīth in which Prophet (P.B.U.H) quoted that

Islam is built upon five  
pillars -

and the first of them is testimony of faith

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(Shahadah) which affirms the oneness of Allah  
(Sahih-al-Bukhari, verse 8)

The core beliefs of Islam will guide the mankind towards their social, cultural and political systems of Islam world. Also they guides the believers about the faith, the worships, rituals and systems. All of them are based on oneness of Allah Almighty.

Sirah-tun-Nabi by Allama Shibli Naumani quoted two verses which states that:

"Touheed is the first chapter  
of Islamic Syllabus

also he has narrated that:

Islam is like a fort and  
the gate of that fort is  
touheed."

Thus Islam teaches us that there is only one God which we have to believe upon and worship to succeed in both the lives.

## Second Part of Kalma - Prophethood:

Allah has sent his messenger for his mankind so that they can guide us the right path through their lives. For us Allah Almighty has sent Prophet (P. B. U. H) who has given us examples through his life and also describe the true meaning of Islam by following every aspect of it showing us the right path which we can follow to achieve success

in every phase of life. Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) is the last prophet (Khatim-un-Nabiyyin). In Quran it is stated in Surah - Ahzab that:

"Muhammad is not the father of anyone your men, but He is the messenger of Allah and the seal of the Prophets. And Allah has Perfect Knowledge of all the things." (Surah Ahzab, verse 40)

By following the way of life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) we can achieve greater here and the world hereafter. There were many examples of Sunnah we can follow in our daily life. He has guided us from wearing clothes to the funeral procession.

In Surah Al-Anbiya it is mentioned that:

"We have sent you (O Muhammad) as a mercy to the worlds."

(Surah Al-Anbiya, verse 107)

Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) also told us to gain knowledge and get educated as well for both men and women. He is also a teacher for all mankind as he told about every way to spend life; it is quoted in hadith as well:

Verily, I have been sent as a teacher to mankind

He told the mankind about the rules and laws followed in Shariah, gave the sources

of Quran and Sunnah.

"Nor does he speak of his own words - It is the revelation we sent down to him"

(Surah Najam, verse 3-4)

Holy Prophet is the perfect role model for all the Human beings. Following his exemplary life will guide us towards the straight path. It is also stated in Quran:

"Indeed in the messenger of Allah you have an example for whoever has hope in Allah and the last Day and remember Allah often."

In a hadith, the Khatam-un-Nabiyyin has also mentioned that:

"I am the last of Prophets there is no prophet after me."

(Sahih-al-Bukhari, <sup>hadith</sup> ~~verse~~ 3530)

### Quran - An Ultimate Guide:

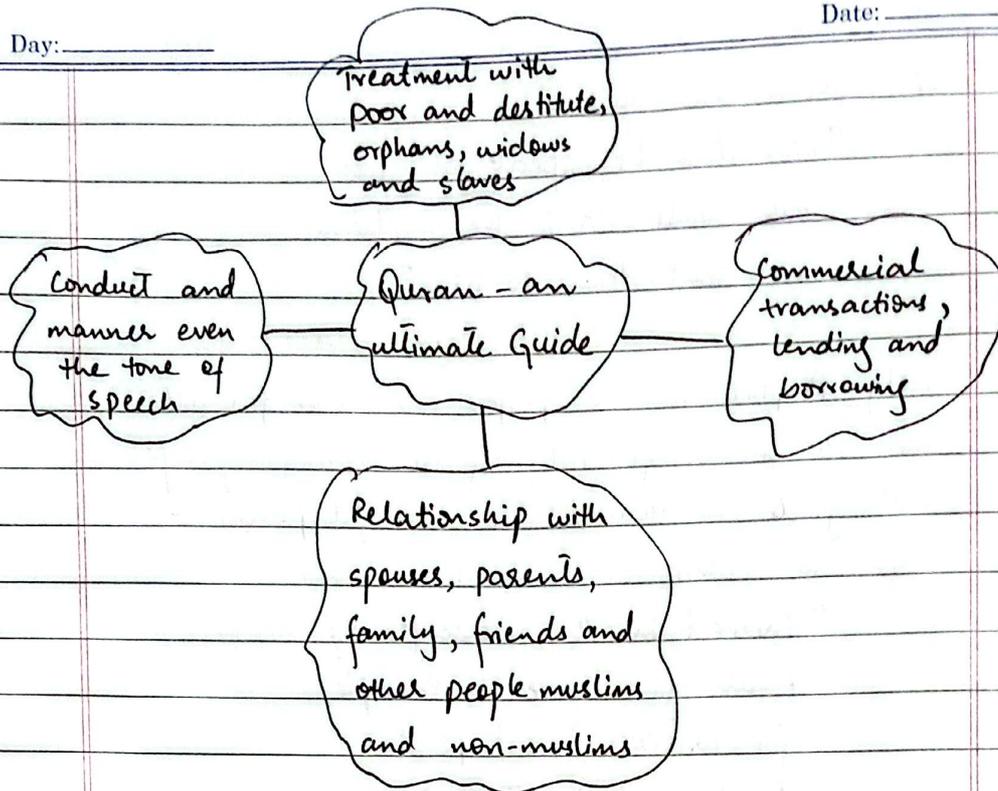
Quran is a book of principles, etiquettes, commands, warnings and advices. It has mentioned in it every way of living for every era of world. As a book of etiquette, it starts from a commandment to,

"Speak fair to the People"

(Surah Al-Baqara, verse 32)

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In Quran there is guide for every path. As it also teaches about our tone stated as:

"Be moderate in your pace.  
And lower your voice, for  
the ugliest of all voices is  
certainly the braying of  
donkeys."

(Surah Al-Hajman, verse 19)

Quran is the complete code of life revealed upon Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). It is the primary source of Islamic law and ethics.

### Universal Brotherhood and Justice:

Islam teaches us to be just and practice equality. Allah has made everyone equal there is no one superior or inferior. All humans are equal in front of Allah regardless of race, color or status.

"O mankind we have created you from males and females and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most righteous to you."

(Surah Al-Hujrat, verse 13)

In the farewell sermon Holy Prophet (PBUH) mentioned about equality of all the human beings.

"O people your Lord is One, and your father is one. You are all from Adam and Adam is from dust. There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, nor of a non-Arab over an Arab; nor of a white person over a black person, nor of black person over a white person, except by piety and good actions."

### Worship and Submission:

Islamic concepts not only restrict us to the rituals they also tells us to perform the worships with sincerity for Allah. Submission in every aspect of life is central. A Quranic verse is stated which says that:

"And I did not create the Jinn and mankind except to worship me."

(Surah Adh-Dhariyat, verse 56)

In a hadith it is also stated:

"Actions are judged by the intentions and every person will receive a reward for what they intended."

(Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith 1)

The action combines beliefs, actions and ethical conduct.

### The Five Pillars of Islam:

The practical implementation of Islam in our daily life is expressed by following the five pillars of Islam:

- 1- Shahadah (Faith): Declare that there is only one god and that Prophet Muhammad is the last messenger of Allah.
- 2- Prayers (Salah): offer the ritual prayers according to the teachings of Islam.
- 3- Zakat (Charity): Distribution of money among the needy and poor.
- 4- Saum (Fasting During Ramadan): Spiritual purification and self-restraint.
- 5- Hajj (Pilgrimage to Mecca): Once in a lifetime for those who are able to go there.

In the Quran it is also mentioned,

"And establish prayers, and give zakah and obey the

Messenger that you may receive  
mercy"

(Surah Al-Nur, verse 56)

### Balance between worldly life and Hereafter:

Islam teaches a balanced life where a person can fulfil his worldly responsibilities and alongside will prepare himself for the life hereafter.

A Quranic verse is referenced here as:

"But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of hereafter, and (yet) do not forget your share of world"

(Surah Al-Qasas, verse 77)

Hence Islam teaches us a balanced and responsible way of living our lives.

### Dignity to Mankind:

The most important teaching of Islam is that every human being is honored and dignified. In ancient times Greek and Romans do not give respect to the poor. Also before the arrival of Prophet (PBUH) the Arabs used to bury their daughters alive. Prophet (PBUH) gave them sense and teaches them the dignity of every person in the world. Allah says in Quran:

"And we have certainly honored the children of Adam."

(Surah Al-Isra, verse 70)

We can think of the dignity from the example

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as Hazrat Bilal (R.A) was the Ethiopian slave but he will be honored with the title of First Muazzin of Islam. This tells that all the human beings are of same honour there is no inequality among as Islam also teaches us same.

Also in Surah teen it is mentioned;

"And we have certainly created man in the best of stature"

(Surah teen)

Scholars also says that, Allah has given civic sense to humans.

Allah has definitely made man superior of all creations.

## ISLAM - As Complete Code of Life.

Islam is not only limited to rituals or worships, it guides the mankind in every aspect of life - spiritual, moral, social, ethical and political.

Allah says in Quran:

"This day I have perfected your religion for you"

(Surah Al-Maida, verse 3)

Islam guides in both individual and collective life.

Individual life: From the very start - the birth we gain teachings from Islam like when a baby born we give azaan in his ears, do aqiqah and so on. Then the upbringing is done based on principles

of Islam. As it is told that the:

Mother is the first institution.

Moving forward character building can be done while keeping the life teachings of Prophet (P.B.U.H) in front. Islam also teaches us to give the right of education to everyone. As it is also mentioned in Hadith that:

**"Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim."**

There are also preachings about earning a halal livelihood through various ways. A complete guide about rights of family and spouses are also given.

**Collective life:** The teachings of Islam guides us that how can we manage our social life. Alongside a political life is also taught through the example of Muhammad (S.A.W), he created the first constitution in Madinah. And hence the other systems including, financial system, system of justice and global affairs are also taught in full detail.

### **Islam Promotes Humanity:**

Islam is a religion of compassion, peace, mercy and service to humanity. It tells us to treat everyone equally.

A perfect character building can be done through Quran and Hadith as there are many examples which will make a person

a perfect being by having a good character. Also by giving charity we can help the poor and needy. This is also mentioned in Quran. By giving medical aid to anyone we will get sawab. As in Surah Maida it is said that:

"Whoever saves one life, it is as if he has saved all the mankind."

(Surah Al-maida, verse 32)

In a Hadees-e-Qudsi it is also stated that:

"Allah shows displeasure from a person who never visits an ill person."

In the farewell sermon prophet (P.B.U.H) also talked about the rights of women, rights of slaves, end of racism and end of nationalism.

Animal should also need to be protected by us. As,

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) reprimanded a person because his camel was thirsty.

Indeed we should take care of the environment protection. There is a hadees related to it;

"Planting a green tree is the best charity."

At another place it is also quoted:

"Don't cut trees even if you are in case of war."