

Concept of Islam:

• Literal Meaning of Islam

The word "Islam" is derived from the root of Arabic word S-L-M (سلم), this root carries a rich set of interconnected meanings that form the foundation of the religion.

→ **Core Meaning:** The primary meaning is "to surrender", "to submit", "to yield" and "to give oneself up."

In a religious context, when a person "aslama" (commits this act), it means he has surrendered his will to God.

→ **Derived Meaning:** The same root also gives the word "Salam" (or "Silm"), which means "peace". Thus, Islam is inherently linked to the concept of peace.

The idea that true peace — both internal and peace of mind and external peace in society — is achieved through this willing submission to the will of God.

As Sayed Ameer Ali (1849-1928) in his book "The Spirit of Islam" defines Islam as:

"Salam (salaam), in its primary sense, means, to be tranquil, at rest, to have done one's duty, to have paid up, to be at perfect peace; in its secondary

sense to surrender "oneself" to Him with whom peace is made."

• Contextual and Conventional meaning

As a religion, "Islam" the name "Islam" was not a new invention but was chosen by God to represent the core principle followed by all prophets. It denotes:

→ **Complete obedience:** complete submission and obedience to Allah.

→ **Attaining Peace:** By living a life of submission and obedience to Allah, a person finds real peace of body and mind.

→ **The Universal Message:** This message of "submission" to one God was preached by all prophets, from Adam to Noah, Abraham (AS), Musa (AS) and Jesus / Hazrat Isa (AS).

→ **The Final Form:** Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent as the last messenger to present God's guidance in its final, complete and preserved form for all humanity. This final guidance is called Islam, with its principles in the **Quran** and its practical application in the **Sunnah** (the life example of the prophet).

• Concept of Islam in Islamic Sharia:

Islamic Sharia (divine law) expands the concept of Islam beyond mere belief to encompass a complete and holistic way of life:

→ A Comprehensive System:

Islam requires submission in all aspects of life, not just in worship. This includes:

- Ethics and morality
- Politics and Governance
- Culture and social behaviour
- Law and Economics
- International Affairs

→ Freedom and Responsibility:

This submission does not negate human freedom. God has granted humans the free will to choose. As the Quran states in Surah al-Kahf (18:29):

مَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ

"Whosoever wants, he should believe; and whosoever wants, he should disbelieve."

The concept is that life is a trust and a test. Man is free to choose, but the path of Islam is the prescribed code that leads to success and harmony.

• Concept of Islam According to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not present a new religion but implemented and embodied the essence of Islam as taught by all prophets. His life serves as the practical model for the Quranic teachings.

→ **The Essence of Guidance:** The Prophet's mission was to guide humanity to the right path. The fundamental principles he taught are encapsulated in the opening verses of Surah Al-Baqarah (2:2-5), which define the "pious" who are on true guidance:

"This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah (Al-muttaqin) — who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what we have provided for them and who believe in that which we have commissioned them with, and in that we commissioned others with before thee, and who have assurance in the life to come; — these have received the direction of their Lord." (Al-Baqarah 2:2-5)

These verses form the ethical core of Islam. They show that according to the Prophet's teaching, Islam is built on: Faith (Iman), Practice (Amal) and outcome (Falah).

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ
رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ

There is no God besides Allah, Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) is his messenger.

Salient Features of

1- Unique Concept of Tawheed

Tawheed is the first part which is considered as the core of Islam. As Quran says in Surah Al-

Ikhlas:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الْقَدِيمُ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ

(112: 1-4)

وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

"Say, 'He is Allah, [who is] One, Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent.'"

Similarly, the importance of Tawheed is also explained by Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH). In the book, *Sirah Tun Nabi* by Allama Shibli Nu'mani, he quotes two hadiths, highlighting the importance of Tawheed:

Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) said:

- ① "Tawheed is the first chapter of Islamic syllabus."
- ② "Islam is like a fort and the gate of that fort is Tawheed."

→ Scholarly View:

The prominent 20th-century scholar Dr. Ismail al-Faruqi in described Tawheed

in his book "**Al-Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life**" as "the primeval source determining all phenomena of Islamic Civilization." For him, it was the "**quintessence**" of Islam that shapes the world view, culture and values of Muslim society.

2- Prophethood:

Prophethood is the second part of Kalma Tayyaba, making it the second most essential and basic feature of Islam. It refers to the belief in the finality of prophethood. (خاتم النبوة) Allah says in the Quran:

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ
اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ.

(33:40 - Al-Ahzab)

"Muhammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the messenger of Allah and last of the prophets."

The life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) serves as the practical embodiment of Islam. While the Quran provides the divine principles, the Prophet's life - known as **Sunnah** - provides the detailed applications, making Islam a comprehensive way of life.

→ Education:

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) served as an educator. His primary mission was to educate and purify people. As Muhammad (PBUH) said:

"Verily I have been sent as a teacher to mankind."

→ Rules and laws:

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) is also a source of rules and laws for mankind. He was not only a spiritual guide but also the head of state, a judge, and the source of binding legislation after Quran. His rulings (Sunnah) covered worship, transactions, criminal law, family matters and international relations. In the light of Prophet's Sunnah, humans are able to choose the right side in such matters.

Allah (S.W.T) states in the Quran:

وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُرَىٰ ۖ إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ ۝

(Surah Najam 53: 3-4)

"Nor does he speak of his own whims. It is only a revelation sent down to him."

→ Role model:

Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and his life is serve as a role model which stems from the fact that his life was a

comprehensive demonstration of how to apply divine guidance in every facet of human existence.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا.

(Surah Ahzab 33: 21)

There has certainly been for you in the messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the last Day and [who] remembers Allah often."

3- Dignity to Mankind:

Islam grants dignity to mankind. In Islam, dignity is not something an individual earns through wealth, race, or social status; it is a divine gift granted by Allah to every human being simply for being human. The Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life was a 23-year struggle to restore this dignity to all segments of society, especially the poor, women and the marginalized — who were stripped of it in pre-Islamic Arabia.

Allah says in the Quran:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ.

"We have indeed created man in the best form."

Similarly, in Surah Al-Isra, Quran explicitly states that God has honored all of humanity, regardless of race, religion, or gender.

(Surah Al-Isra 17:70) **وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ**

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

This shows several perspectives:

- ① Humans are superior to all the creations.
- ② Respect is based on mankind, not religion.
- ③ Children of Adam, which shows both men and women are honored and dignified. → **irrespective of gender.**

وَلَعَلَّ مَن تَشَاءُ وَنَزَّلَ عَلَٰن تَشَاءُ

(Surah Al-Iman 3:26)

"And whom He honours whom He wills.
And disgraces whom he wills."

Thus dignity is one of the main salient features of Islam that is unearned, universal, and undeviable. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not come to create a hierarchy of the "pious elite" but to establish a society where the

most vulnerable — orphans, women, slaves and the poor — were treated with the same honor as the powerful.

4. Islam as a complete code of life

The concept of Islam as a "complete code of life" distinguishes it from being merely a set of rituals or a private belief system. Islam provides guidance in the individual and collective aspects of human life.

1. The Individual Dimension:

For the individual, Islam provides a framework for internal peace, moral discipline and spiritual purpose.

As Allah (SWT) says in the Quran:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهُ ۝ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهُ ۝

(Surah Shams 91: 9-10)

"Successful indeed is the one who purifies their soul and doomed is the one who corrupts it."

The five pillars of Islam (Shahada, Prayer, Fasting, Zakat, Hajj) are not mere rituals. They are training systems designed to discipline the ego (nafs), instill God-consciousness (Taqwa), and cultivate moral virtues like patience, generosity, and humility.

Moreover, Islam also emphasizes the importance of education for all human beings.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ قَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ

(Sunan Ibn Majah 224)

"Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim."

2. Collective Dimension:

Islam does not view believers as isolated individuals. It establishes a collective entity — the Ummah (community), with laws, social structures, and system of governance.

As Allah states in the Quran:

وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا

"But Allah has permitted trade and has forbidden interest."

This shows how Islam provides detailed regulations for collective economic life to ensure justice and prevent exploitation.

Similarly, Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) said:

"The ruler is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock."

This highlights how Islam provides meaningful insights for the regulation of collective life.

5. An Eternal Religion

Islam does not present itself as a religion for a specific nation, tribe, or historical period. Instead it claims:

- **Universality** → For all humanity
- **Eternality** → Its teachings remain valid and applicable for all times.

A religion can only claim to be eternal if it is complete. If it lacks guidance on essential matters, later generations would need to add to it or seek other guidance elsewhere. The Quran declares its own completeness as Allah says:

"This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as your way of life (Din)."

Furthermore, Allah (swt) openly proclaims the safety/safeguarding of the Holy Quran which makes the teachings of Islam eternal:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ۝

"We have sent down this Book and verily we shall safeguard it."

6- Unity of Matter and Spirit

Unity of matter and spirit is a distinctive feature of Islam, which presents a balanced and comprehensive way of life. Islam integrates both material and spiritual dimensions harmoniously. It does not advocate asceticism or withdrawal from worldly life; rather, it emphasizes the fulfillment of life through righteous conduct within society. The Quran clearly reflects this balanced approach in Surah-Al-Baqarah:

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا
عَذَابَ النَّارِ -

"Our Lord! Give us something fine in this world as well as something fine in the hereafter."

Likewise, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"A Muslim who lives in the midst of society and bears with patience the afflictions that come to him is better than the one who shuns society and cannot bear any wrong done to him."

7- Rationality and Practicality:

Islam is characterized as a rational and practical religion, free from mythology and irrational beliefs. The fundamental articles of faith in Islam such as belief in the Oneness of God (Tauheed), the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH), and the Hereafter are grounded in reason and logical understanding. Islam awakens the human faculty of critical thinking and repeatedly encourages reflection upon reality. The importance of knowledge and usage of critical thinking are shown in the Quran at different places:

1 → The Quran commands believers to seek knowledge, as expressed in Surah Taha:

وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا -

(Surah Taha 20:114)

"O, my Lord! increase me in knowledge."

2 - قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ -

"Say: Are those who know and those who do not know alike?"

(a2-Zumar 39:9)

The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) further reinforce the importance of knowledge and learning. He declared that:

"He who leaves his home in search of knowledge walks in the path of God."

(Tarmidhi and Darimi)