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QUESTION: 2

* Deen Vs Religion:

The terms "Deen" and "Religion" are often used interchangeably, but they hold distinct meanings, specifically in Islamic context.

• Deen (Deen-e-Haq):

It is a comprehensive term that refers to a complete way of life, a system encompassing all aspects of human existence - spiritual, social, economic and political. It is a divine and all encompassing code of conduct that provide guidance for both an individual's relationship with God and their interactions with other human beings.

In Islam, the concept of Deen is seen as a universal, unchanging truth revealed by God to his messengers. It emphasizes absolute submission to God's will and the establishment of just and moral society.

- Religion:

Religion is a narrower concept, often associated with a set of private beliefs, rituals and practices that primarily focuses on the individual's relationship with a divine entity. It tends to be more personal and subjective, and different religions can co-exist with varying beliefs and doctrines. While religion may include a moral code, it typically doesn't extend to a complete system for political or social governance in the way

that Deen does.

In Essence, Deen is a holistic system that includes religion but goes far beyond it, seeking to guide and govern all spheres of life, both public and private.

* The Need for Religion in a Scientific Age

In an era dominated by Science and technology, some argue that religion has become irrelevant.

However, a closer look reveals that religion continues to play a vital role in human life for several reasons.

* Providing a Moral and Ethical Compass:

Science can tell us "what is" and "how is" thing working, but it can not tell us "what ought to be". It provides us with

the tools to change the world but not the moral guidance on whether we should or how we should use those tools.

Religion offers a maximum framework of values and ethics that can help individuals and societies navigate complex moral questions. As Allah says in Quran:

"O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parent and relatives ... So follow not (personal) inclination, lest you not be just..."

(Al-Nisa, 4:135)

Similarly, this moral guidance can also be found in many Hadith. As Prophet (S.A.W) said, "The best of you are those

who have the best character."

(Sahih Al-Bukhari)

* Addressing Existential Questions:

Science is excellent at explaining the physical universe, but it does not provide answers to fundamental existential questions about the meaning and purpose of life, the nature of suffering, or what happens after death.

Religion offers a sense of meaning and purpose that many people find necessary for a fulfilling life, providing a spiritual dimension that science, by its very nature, can not.

Allah says in Surah Adh-Dariyat:

"And I did not create the Jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (51:56)

In another Surah, Allah says:

"Did you think that We created you in play (without any purpose) and that you would not be brought back to Us?"

(23:115)

* Fostering Community and Social Cohesion

Allah says: "The believers are nothing else than brothers. So make reconciliation between you brothers, and be mindful of Allah that you may receive mercy" (49:10)

Religion has historically served as powerful force for building communities and social structures.

It provides a shared set of beliefs, rituals and traditions that can create a sense of belonging, solidarity and mutual support among people.

This communal aspect is a

Source of strength. Prophet (SAW) said:

"The similitude of the believers in their mutual love, mercy and compassion is that of a body; when one part of it complains, the rest of the body joins it in staying awake and suffering fever."
(Sahih Muslim)

* Promoting Peace and Cooperation:

Allah says in Surah Ma'idah:

"And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed Allah is severe in penalty." (5:2)

While there have been historical conflicts in the name of religion many religious traditions also contain core teachings of peace,

compassion, justice and forgiveness. In a world where scientific and technological power can be used for destruction, these religious values can act as a counter-balance, encouraging empathy, cooperation, and the pursuit of a more just and harmonious global society.

QUESTION: 3

The philosophy of Zakat is rooted in the concept of purification and growth. The word "Zakat" literally means to purify or to cleanse. By giving a portion of one's wealth, a Muslim purifies the remainder of their wealth and their soul from greed, selfishness and attachment

to material possession. This act is not seen as mere charity but as mandatory obligation and a form of worship that acknowledges that all wealth ultimately belongs to God and is a trust given to humanity. The philosophy also emphasizes that wealth should not be hoarded but should circulate in society, benefitting the community as a whole.

- Social Impacts:

Zakat act as a powerful tool for socio-economic justice and community building. It addresses the issue of wealth inequality by redistributing resources from the affluent to less fortunate. A famous account from the time of

the Caliph Hazrat Umar (R.A) relates that when he sent a Zakaat collector to a region, the collector returned with the funds, saying that there were no poor people left who were eligible to receive Zakaat. This illustrates how, when properly implemented, Zakat can eradicate poverty within a society.

The regular transfer of wealth stimulates the economy, as it increases the purchasing power of the poor, thereby reducing poverty and dependence.

Allah says in Surah Tawbah: "Indeed the alms are only for the poor and the needy, and for those employed to collect (Zakat) and for bringing

hearts together (for Islam) and for freeing captives and for those in debt and for the cause of Allah and for the (stranded) traveller - an obligation (imposed) by Allah. And Allah is all knowing and wise". (9:60)

• Moral Impacts:

On a moral level, Zakaat serves as a profound discipline for both the giver and the receiver. For the giver, it is practice that purifies the soul of avarice and materialism. It reminds them that their wealth is a blessing from God, and they have a duty to use it responsibly. Allah says in Surah Al-e-Imran:

"By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give freely of that which you

love, and whatever you give,
Allah knows it well."

(3:92)

The act of giving Zakat fosters empathy, compassion and humility. For the recipient, Zakat provides a dignified means of receiving assistance.

Prophet (S.A.W) said, "Charity does not decrease wealth."

(Sahih Muslim.

◦ Individual Impacts:

Individually paying Zakat strengthens a person's faith and spiritual connection with God. It is one of the five pillars of Islam, and fulfilling this obligation is a testament to one's sincere belief. It encourages a deeper sense of gratitude for God's blessings and growth to one's

Wealth, not just in this world but also in the hereafter. It is form of self purification that cleanses a person's character.

Allah says in Surah Al-Baqarah (And Establish prayer and give Zakat and whatever good you put forth for yourselves, you will find with Allah-Indeed Allah of whatever you do, is seeing). (Al-Baqarah, 2:110).

A reference to this individualistic purification in terms of hadith is: "There are two deeds, if a person practices them, he will enter paradise... and he mentioned amongst them: giving Zakat from his wealth willingly, and out of a good heart".

(Sunan Ibn-e-Majah).

QUESTION: 4

The Sirah (biography) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) serves as a profound role model for both diplomats and educators due to his exemplary conducts and teachings.

- Role Model for a Diplomat:
The Prophet (S.A.W) demonstrated exceptional diplomatic skills throughout his life.

* Treaty negotiations:

He engaged in fair and strategic treaty negotiations, such as treaty of Hudaibiyah which initially appeared unfavourable but ultimately led to significant gains for the Community of Muslims. He always did fair agreements.

* Peaceful Resolutions of Conflicts:

He consistently sought peaceful resolutions to conflicts, prioritizing dialogue and understanding over confrontation whenever possible.

* Interfaith relations:

He established positive relations with various religious communities, as exemplified by the Charter of Madinah, which granted rights and responsibilities to all citizens regardless of their faith.

* Maintaining Trust and Integrity:

His honesty and trustworthiness, even among his adversaries, were crucial in building credibility and facilitating diplomatic interactions. He was known as Al-Sadiq and Al-Amin.

◦ Role Model for an Educator-

The Prophet (S.A.W) was also a master education, employing effective pedagogical methods.

* Leading by examples:

He taught not only through words but also through his actions, embodying the principles he advocated.

* Emphasis on Knowledge:

He consistently encouraged the pursuit of knowledge, emphasizing its importance in both religious and worldly methods and matters.

* Patient and Compassionate

Teachings:

He approached teaching with immense patience and compassion, adapting his methods to the understanding levels of his audience.

* Practical Application of teachings:

He ensured that his teachings were practical and applicable to daily life, providing clear guidance on various aspects of human existence.

* Community Building through education:

He established institutions and practices that fostered a learning environment within the nascent Muslim community such as Masjid-al-Nabwi which served as a center for education.

QUESTION: 5

Islam places a profound emphasis on the rights and protection of minorities, especially known as "Ahl al-Dhimma". (People of

Covenant - primarily Jews and Christians, and later including other religions and religious groups, residing in Muslim majority lands. This emphasis is rooted in core Islamic principles found in the Quran and the Sunnah.

o Foundations of Minority Rights in Islam:

* Religious freedom:

The Quran explicitly states, "There is no compulsion in religion" (2:256). This verse is a cornerstone of Islamic teachings on religious liberty, ensuring individuals are free to choose and practice their faith without coercion.

The Constitution of Madinah, established by Prophet (PBUH) further cemented this principle by guaranteeing religious freedom

and protection to diverse communities, including Jewish tribes, in the newly formed Islamic state.

* Protection of Life and Property

Islamic law mandates the inviolability of the lives and property of minorities. The Prophet (S.A.W) said: "Whoever kills a person who has a truce with the Muslims will never smell the fragrance of Paradise".

This underscores the sanctity of life and the state's responsibility to protect all its inhabitants, regardless of faith.

* Equal Protection Under Law:

The Quran emphasizes human equality, stating, "O mankind, indeed, the most noble of you with Allah is that (believer) who has al-baqaa" (49:13)

This principle extends to legal and judicial rights, ensuring minorities receive fair treatment and justice alongside Muslims.

* Social and Economic Rights

Minorities are granted the freedom to engage in economic activities, own property and practice their professions. Historical examples, such as Non-Muslims holding high positions in various Islamic caliphates, illustrate the integration of minorities into the social and economic fabric of Muslim societies.

* Cultural and Communal Autonomy

Islamic tradition, especially through systems like the "millet system" during the Ottoman Empire, allowed religious minorities considerable autonomy in managing their internal

affairs, including personal law, education and religious institutions, as long as they abided by the broader laws of the state.

This ensured the preservation of their distinct cultural and religious identities.

• Responsibilities of Minorities

In return for these protections, minorities were generally expected to fulfill certain obligations, most notably the payment of Jizya (a poll tax). This tax exempted them from a military service and other financial obligations incumbent upon Muslims, serving as civic duty in exchange for state protection.

In essence, Islam's emphasis on minority rights is not merely a matter of tolerance but a

fundamental aspect of its
ethical and legal framework,
aiming to establish a just
and inclusive society where
all individuals, irrespective of
their religious affiliation, are
treated with dignity and respect.
