

TOLERANCE IN ISLAM

By
Dr. Hifz ur Rehman *

Intolerance is on the increase in the world today, causing death, genocide, violence, religious persecution as well as confrontations on different levels. Some times it is racial and ethnic, some times it is religious and ideological, other times it is political and social. In every situation it is evil and painful. How can we solve the problem of intolerance? How can we assert our own beliefs and positions without being intolerant to others? How can we bring tolerance into the world today?

I would like to discuss some of these issues from an Islamic point of view.

What is tolerance? Literally the word "tolerance" means "to bear." As a concept it means "respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of the world's cultures, forms of expression and ways of being human." In Arabic it is called "Tasamuh" تسامح. There are also other words that give similar meanings, such as "Hilm حلم" (forbearance) or "'Afu عفو (pardon, forgiveness) or "Safh صفح" (overlooking, disregarding). In the Persian and Urdu languages, we use the word "rawadari" which comes from "rawa" meaning "acceptable or bearable" and "dashtan" meaning "to hold". Thus it means to hold something acceptable or bearable.

Tolerance is a basic principle of Islam. It is a religious moral duty. It does not mean "concession, condescension or indulgence." It does not mean lack of principles, or lack of seriousness about one's principles.

* Government Garden College Rawalpindi.

The Necessity of Interfaith dialogue

Islamic civilization produced a moral and humanistic tradition that preserved Greek philosophy, and generated much science, art, and socially benevolent thought. Unfortunately, however, the modern puritans are dissipating and wasting this inspiring moral tradition. They are increasingly shutting off the possibilities for a tolerant interpretation of the Islamic tradition.

So, after all of these historical and Quranic information I want to remind you that Allah (God) is not the Allah (God) of the Jews or the Christians or the Muslims only, any more than the sun shines or the rain falls for Jews or Christians or Muslims only. I want to end my speech with these words, which influence me a lot:

Be so tolerant that your heart becomes wide like the ocean. Become inspired with faith and love for others. Offer a hand to those in trouble, and be concerned about everyone

Thank you for having us and peace be with you.

of tolerance, dialogue, and reconciliation. "As a result, I would like to indicate that tolerance is not something that was invented by us. Tolerance was first introduced on this Earth by the prophets whose teacher was Allah. The best example to it is from the Holy Qur'an. On the sad incident of Slander to Hazrat Aisha, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) by hypocrites, His father Hazrat Abu Bakr, who had been giving financial support to one of those who was involved in the slander, took an oath not to give any more support to this person. But the verse that was revealed warned that this most faithful companion of the Prophet should be more lenient. The 22nd verse of Surah Al Noor reads: "Let not those among you who are endowed with grace and amplitude of means resolve by oath against helping their kinsmen, those in want and those who have left their homes in Allah's cause: Let them forgive and overlook. Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you. For Allah is the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful

I want to draw your attention in particular to the expression at the end of this verse, "Do you not wish that God should forgive you. For God is the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful "Allah indicates that just as He forgives us, so too should we forgive one another for the mistakes that we make. And this is illustrated to us as a Qur'anic virtue in the character of Abu Bakr.

So, it is our duty as mentioned in the Hadith, "Take on the virtue of Allah" we too should forgive and cover the mistakes of our fellows as per Allah's name, Al-Sattaar الستار."

Closing up, as Gulen says, "Treating love with love and treating even enmity with love is the most distinguished characteristic of a heart that is overflowing with faith. Hating every one means that Satan has grasped one's heart. Love humanity, admire humanity."

Final Thoughts

Historically, Islamic civilization has displayed a remarkable ability to recognize possibilities of tolerance, and to act upon these possibilities.

The Necessity of Interfaith dialogue

Indeed, I would like to give some examples that prove that today dialogue and tolerance can really be practiced among world communities through mutual understanding.

Free from the context of 9/11, from early 1970s Muhammad Fethullah Gulen had been one of the outspoken and balancing personalities in Turkey who emphasized through his nationwide sermons that Islam by itself is the religion of love, tolerance and reconciliation and victory over the civilized people can only be possible through persuasion.

Muhammed Fethullah Gulen has been from his earliest years a gifted scholar and thinker, and a prolific writer and poet. He is well known for his ardent endeavors to strengthen bonds among all peoples of the world and promote dialogue and tolerance. 500 Turkish private educational institutions in Turkey and 500 international schools and dialogue centers in more than 100 world countries in Asia, Africa, Australia, Americas and Europe, promote love, tolerance and reconciliation. These institutions which are founded by Gulen's encouragements pave the way for a better world to live in for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

In these schools, black children share the same desk with white children and Muslim children play together with Christian, Buddhist or Jewish ones; that is thousands of children from various cultures, religions, languages and backgrounds take education in a common ground, free from any ignorance, bigotry and misunderstanding. A better world is in the making.

As a vivid example, on being asked by the volunteer Turkish educationists who ask Gulen's advices on admitting Christian children in Albania, Gulen replies, "They are humans too, don't you think?"

Here Gulen gives a specific definition for tolerance, He says: "Tolerance does not mean being influenced by others or joining them it means accepting others as they are and knowing how to get along with them."

All around the world, in the intercultural dialogue centers, thousands of people from different creeds and cultures meet at the unifying junction

from the Byzantines, he insisted on entering the city with only a small number of his companions. Proclaiming to the inhabitants that their lives and property were safe, and that their places of worship would never be taken from them, he asked the Christian patriarch Sophronius to accompany him on a visit to all the holy places. The Patriarch invited him to pray in a Church, but he preferred to pray outside its gates, saying that if he accepted, later generations of Muslims might use his action as an excuse to turn it into a mosque. Above is the mosque built on the spot where Omar did pray?

Another example: prior to the Spanish Inquisition, Jews and Christians lived and prospered in Andalus (Spain) for centuries under Muslim rule. Islam granted freedom of worship to all religious communities in the city. In Spain under the Umayyads and in Baghdad under the Abbasid Khalifas, Christians and Jews, equally with Muslims, were admitted to the Schools and universities - not only that, but were boarded and lodged in hostels at the cost of the state. When the Moors were driven out of Spain, the Christian conquerors held a terrific persecution of the Jews. Those who were fortunate enough to escape fled, some of them to Morocco and many hundreds to the Turkish Empire, where their descendants still live in separate communities, and still speak among themselves an antiquated form of Spanish. The Muslim Empire was a refuge for all those who fled from persecution by the Inquisition. As another example of that: at the late 20th century Jews were being tortured in Russia and the Emperor of Ottoman Empire, Sultan Abdulhamid II who was the caliph of Muslims in the world at that time sent a warning to Russia saying: I want you stop torturing Jews and if you do not do so, I will come there with my army and make you stop that. The problem was solved at that time by the means of your Muslim brothers.

So far, we have addressed to the importance of dialogue and tolerance so as to maintain a worldwide peace and mutual understanding. A question arose: "Is tolerance a story of the past or can it be applicable in these modern times?"

what she was supposed to do? Then, Allah had revealed one verse to Muhammad (ﷺ) 27 explaining what Muslims are supposed to do in such cases:

﴿ لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُواكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴾

Allah does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of (your) religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely Allah loves the doers of justice.¹ If we pay our attention to the situation carefully, we see that the aforesaid woman (Asma's stepmother) was a pagan. But even though she was an unbeliever, Allah encouraged Asma to shove her (and also all of us) the way of kindness and deal justly with her. Therefore we need to compare the situation, what we see is so obvious; the Islam is full of tolerance towards religious differences especially towards the People of the Scripture because of the same source.

To bring some traditional proofs of what we claim, I would like mention that, once the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was passing a Jewish funeral and he stopped to pay his respects. When reminded that the man being buried was a Jew, Muhammad replied, He is still a human being though. He showed the value given to humanity in Islam.

It is one function of Islamic law to protect the privileged status of minorities, and this is why non-Muslim places of worship have flourished all over the Islamic world. History provides many examples of Muslim tolerance towards other faiths:

When the second caliph Omar (May Allah be pleased with him رضي الله عنه) entered Jerusalem in the year 634, Islamic law also permits non-Muslim minorities to set up their own courts, which implement family laws drawn up by the minorities themselves. When the caliph Omar took Jerusalem

¹-The Quran, 60/ 8

let me say that I find much confusion of ideas even among Muslims on this subject, owing to defective study of the Quran and the Prophet's life. Many Muslims seem to forget that our Prophet had allies among the idolaters even after Islam had triumphed in Arabia, and that he fulfilled his treaty with them perfectly until the term thereof. Secondly, let us turn our attention to the most important verse of the Quran in this subject. Allah (God) says: "There is no compulsion in religion."¹ Allah (God) also says in the Quran about an attitude that every Muslim missionary is supposed to have:

﴿وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ
حَتَّى يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

And if your Lord had pleased, surely all those who are in the earth would have believed, all of them; will you then force men till they become believers?"

Muslims should keep in mind this Quranic statement all the times:

﴿لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ﴾

To you your religion, and to me my religion."²

I have mentioned lots of verses in my speech but there are also worth mentioning some historical examples for my claims? Yes certainly there are. As an example for the way of interaction from Islamic perspective with people who are neither Muslims nor Christians nor Jews, I want to give a special example. This example is about Hazrat Asma, sister of Hazrat Aisha. One time her pagan stepmother had come to city of Madina from Mecca and had wanted to see her stepchild Asma, but Asma (Peace be upon her) had hesitated to behave towards her respectfully and show her some hospitality, because of that she went to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) to ask about the situation and to learn

¹- The Quran, 2/256

²- The Quran 109/6

Earth. And Allah sent Moses as a messenger to warn and guide him. But we need to look at this verse carefully to understand the way of communication with others according to Islam. Allah says:

﴿ اذْهَبَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ (٤٣) فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لِّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ

يَخْشَىٰ

"Go both of you (Moses and his brother Aaron), unto Pharaoh. Lo! He has transgressed (the bounds). And speak unto him a gentle word, that peradventure he may heed or fear." ¹

If Allah (God) commands to speak a gentle word unto Pharaoh who had claimed to be The God of the Earth, what about the others, such as the people of the book? Christians or Jews? As it appears, undoubtedly there is no way to make disturbing remarks while sharing the same world together especially while we are having lots of common things among us. As another example for that let me indicate that the most important part of Islam, as you know, is to worship only one Allah (God) without associating anybody or anything with Him. And let's see how a Muslim is supposed to behave if his parents force him to leave his/her belief: 'And if they contend with you that you should associate with Me what you have no knowledge of, do not obey them, and keep company with them in this world kindly, and follow the way of him who turns to Me, then to Me is your return, then will I inform you of what you did'

After the indication of this relationship and some common things among us let me ask you one question:

Is Islam really tolerant of other beliefs?

Because of the place where I am giving this talk, I especially emphasized the relationship among Muslims and the People of the Scripture but the Quran indicates one universal Islamic law which is not only related to the People of the Book but also to other beliefs. First of all

¹-The Quran, 20/ 43,44

﴿وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

And argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is better save with such of them as do wrong; and say: We believe in that which has been revealed unto us and revealed unto you; our Allah and your Allah is One, and unto Him we surrender".¹ in this verse Allah teaches believers in what way they are supposed to interact with others and what kind of behavior they are supposed to have. There is a worth consider and noticeable commandment in this verse: Allah commands Muslims to find a common word while they are having a conversation with the People of the Scripture, it is read: and say: We believe in that which has been revealed unto us and revealed unto you; our Allah and your Allah is One, and unto Him we surrender.² According to Ibn Jarir this coming verse of the Quran should be mentioned at this point.

﴿ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ...﴾

Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance.³ Ibn Kathir ابن كثير mentions the story of Moses (Peace be upon him ﷺ) and Pharaoh as a brilliant example at this point 21 Pharaoh was the ruler of Egypt and was claiming to be the God of the

¹-The Quran, 29/046

²-The Quran, 2/046

³-The Quran, 16/125

righteous of you. Allah (God) is All-Knowing, All-Aware.”¹

With regard to the encouragement of you may come to know one another I would like to mention a really important fact in our religious life. As you all know, some of the most important effects of the religion in our daily life are its effect to our diet and our family life such as marriage rules etc. So, let's see what Quran says in this matter:

﴿الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَلَلٌ لَّكُمْ
وَطَعَامُكُمْ حَلَلٌ لَهُمْ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ
أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ
مُسَافِحِينَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي أَخْدَانٍ....﴾

"This day (all) the good things are allowed to you; and the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them; and the chaste from among the believing women and the chaste from among those who have been given the Book before you (are lawful for you); when you have given them their dowries, their mehr مهر, taking (them) in marriage”²

All the times while we are shopping in the US we are looking some signs marked on food products indicating that whether that food is kosher or not. On the other hand a Muslim man can get married only with a follower of one of the Abrahamic faiths such as a Jewish or a Christian girl. What a significant common thing! Followers of these three religions should look at this verse very carefully and understand how Allah encourages them to have a wonderful relationship among them. Its meaning related to this significant common thing must not be forgotten all the time until the end of the days because of its importance.

There is a special verse which is related to the People of the Scripture, teaching how to interact with them:

¹-The Quran, 49/13

²-The Quran, 5/05

﴿وَإِنْ جَاهِدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

And if they contend with you that you should associate with Me what you have no knowledge of, do not obey them, and keep company with them in this world kindly, and follow the way of him who turns to Me, then to Me is your return, then will I inform you of what you did¹ If there was a prohibition in the first and second verses above to get some friends from none-Muslims, in the third verse Allah would not command us to "keep company with them in this world kindly" Because of this verse, acceptable translation for the word of Awliya 'أولياء' should be "Protectors" or "Guardians" in these verses of the Qura'an.

Off course you can not give this "Friends" translation for that verse, because, in this case also the verse which gives permission to Muslim men to get married with the women of the people of the book should be illogical: Off course some body should love his wife even if he got married with a Christian or Jewish girl.

The Islamic principles that guide the relations among the other people

First of all there is a general principle in the Qura'an which teaches us what to think about the other people: I think we all should keep in mind this coming verse of the Qura'an:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾

"O mankind ! We created you from a single soul, male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may come to know one another. Truly, the most honored of you in Allah's (God) sight is the most

¹-The Quran, 31.015

"And you will certainly find the nearest in friendship to those who believe (to be) those who say: We are Christians." This reality is what I had seen in the USA during my stay there.

There is a really important reality in the Qura'an if you notice here in this coming verse, usually whenever Allah (God) mentions the word "Qura'an" he describes it as "a verifier:

﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ
وَمُهَيِّمًا عَلَيْهِ.....﴾

And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the Scripture and a guardian over it" ² For me this reality of the Quran is also to remind us the importance of seeking the common ground among us.

Some Verses Which Are Claimed To Be Against Interfaith Dialogue

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ
بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾

سورة المائدة آية ٥١

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا آبَاءَكُمْ وَإِخْوَانَكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا
الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾ سورة

التوبة ٢٣.

The word ﴿أَوْلِيَاءَ﴾ is mostly translated as "friends" in our commentary books, but it is completely wrong translation, because of this coming verse of the Qura'an:

¹ -The Quran, 5:82

² -The Quran, 5/48

Christians and Jews? Allah says:

﴿لَيْسُوا سَوَاءً مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ يَتْلُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ (١١٣) يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَأُولَئِكَ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (١١٤)﴾

"They are not all alike; of the followers of the Book there is an upright party; they recite Allah's communications in the nighttime and they adore (Him). They believe in Allah and the last day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and they strive with one another in hastening to good deeds, and those are among the righteous"¹.

There is a worth note fact in the verses above that Allah (God) emphasize the most important common beliefs among three religions, to believe in the same Allah (God) and the Last Day (Hereafter). As we see Allah (God) does not mention prophet hood here. In my opinion that means: forget the differences and be together in common things for the sake of peace.

We as Muslims should keep in mind that Qura'an commands Muslims to be together in common things in this coming verse:

﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ﴾

"Say; O followers of the Book! Come to an equitable proposition between us and you"²

These verses are not all we have about the others in the Qura'an, right now we'd better turn our attention to other these coming verses:

﴿... وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُم مَّوَدَّةَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَى﴾

¹-The Qura'an, 3/113, 114

²-The Quran, 3/64

the Qura'an. It is very obvious that there is also a big invitation for the People of the Scripture like that: "O Believers! Concentrate on the Holy Books and try to understand it correctly, so, finally make it your way of life. Allah invites the People of the Book to look at their own scriptures carefully" I can't imagine a better reason for the dialog among the members of these religions. Its meaning is so clear: DIALOG!

As we all know according to the Islamic thought, it is impossible to have a benefit from the Qura'an without believing in the Bible, Torah, The Book of Psalms, etc. First of all, there are six pillars in the Islamic creed that everybody has to believe to become a Muslim or to stay as a Muslim. In my opinion first two of these pillars encourage Muslims to the interfaith dialog.

1. To believe in the holy books which are revealed before the Qura'an.
2. To believe in all of the Prophets (Peace be upon them ﷺ) who are sent before Muhammad (ﷺ) by Allah (God).

As it is obvious, there are some reasons for a dialog instead of hate among us just in the beginning of the Qura'an.

If I am supposed to start talking about today's subject directly I would say tolerance among the members of different religions begins in being aware of the similarities and common things. PEACE BEGINS IN UNDERSTANDING OTHERS. So, because of that we should learn a little more about the people around us in the light of Qura'an.

Verses Of The Qura'an Which Encourage Tolerance And Interfaith Dialogue

If we start reciting all of the verses in the favor of dialogue, it will take too much time. Because the Qura'an is full of such kind of verses. If you just remember the stories of the previous prophets in the Qura'an you will realize that what they were doing was interfaith dialogue with their own nations all the times.

So, after this brief encouragement above to have a good relationship with the People of the Scripture what can be inferred about some kind of

"Say: Jam no new thing among the messengers, I am no bringer of a new doctrine among the messengers"

Let me recite some more verses of the Qura'an which will support this idea:

﴿ شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ ﴾

"The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah and that which We have revealed to you and that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim and Mousa and Jesus that keep to obedience and be not divided therein"¹

These two verses above simply say that Muhammad (ﷺ) did not claim that he brought a new religion. He had never said even a single word indicating such a claim. As everybody knows we are all the members of The Family of Abraham In fact Muhammad (ﷺ) indicates that directly, He says: Both in this world and in the Hereafter, I am the nearest of all the people to Jesus, the son of Mary (Peace be upon both of them ﷺ). The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one.²

According to the Muslims Judaism, Christianity and Islam are three forms of one religion, which, in its original purity, was the religion of Abraham: Al-Islam, that perfect Self-Surrender to the Will of Allah (God), which is the basis of Theocracy. According to these verses that I mentioned, it is undeniable that the Qura'an is just a last step of the processing of revelation since the beginning of the time. Allah describes three holy books and says about all of them that there are guidance and a light in them. If you listen carefully you will notice that in these verses there are also two remarkable commands: "Let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein." The same thing, Related to this verse above, we believe that, What Allah revealed is Torah, Bible and

¹-The Quran, 42/13

²- Ahmed ibn. Hanbel: 10558, Narrated by Abu Huraira

about you Muslims that you were worshipping to the Prophet Muhammad, thanks for your enlightening speech"

When I heard that, I was shocked and could not help asking this question: "Is this a very well spread idea in the States about Muslims?" and she said "Yes". She informed me later about the reasons of this misconception: "It is a comparison of Christianity with Islam; we have, as Christians, Jesus in our belief as a divine being to be worshipped. And as a result of this, most of the common Christians believe that you, Muslims, have the prophet Muhammad as a divine being to be worshipped. This is the first and the most important reason, but the second one is that, you, Muslims do not have interaction with non-Muslims, you do not introduce Islam to the others, this is also worth considering reason for such kind of stereotyping about Islam here in the USA. That is my first time to meet with Muslims, to sit together and share some information among us" she said.

As you see in this example, If Mrs. Rebecca had corrected her wrong belief about Islam; it is the result of interfaith dialogue activities. So, the benefits of such kind of programs cannot be denied of course. If it is the case then, right now it is time to analyze the place of that in Islam.

Before I start giving some detailed information about the tolerance and interfaith dialogue in Islam let me ask one question:

Did Muhammad (ﷺ) claim that he brought and established a new and different Religion?

This question has an immediate answer: No! According to the Qura'an Allah has revealed Torah, Bible and finally the Qura'an. All of them came from the same source. In fact, there are some changes among them but these are not related to the essential beliefs but related to current conditions of that age in which they were all revealed. And of course it is really normal. This coming verse remind us the position of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ):

﴿قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدْعًا مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ﴾

3. They submit the commandments of Allah (God) sincerely like Abraham (ﷺ) even though they do not understand what Allah (God) says in the Qura'an exactly.
4. They believe that Jesus is a messenger of Allah (God) like the prophet Muhammad and they perform five times daily prayer, fast during a holy month, gives obligatory charity and worship Allah (God) ¹.

This declaration from Vatican immediately reminds me our slogan "Peace Begins in Understanding Others" Mostly this declaration is being shown as a starting point for such kind of dialogue activities, but in fact it is not correct. If you consider the whole history of humankind, you realize that it was started with the previous prophets of Allah with their own communities. Especially 14 centuries ago the achievements of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) are really significant as we will analyze here in this article.

Thanks Allah nowadays, when it was needed more and more in this century of wars, the number of these kinds of activities, declarations etc. from both sides are being given and interfaith dialog among the followers of different faith is increasing and getting better day by day.


Right now, before I start giving some details about the topic, I would like to talk about one of my experiences: I was in the United States, at Indiana University to pursue my masters in 2003, we have founded there a group which is Indiana Muslim Dialogue Group (www.bmdg.org). As one of the representatives of this group, I had visited so many churches and given some seminars over there about Islam. Once we were invited by St. John Catholic Center to give a speech about "Islam in General". This was a special program of Interfaith Dialogue Club activity of this church. There were some other representatives from different faiths also; every representative gave a speech about their belief at that time. But after talking about "Islam in General" Mss. Rebecca, the religious director of Indiana University and in the mean time the head of five different Church told me something very surprising. She said: 'O Mr. Murat! I was thinking

¹- 3.Abott, M.S. Walter, the Documents of Vatican II 1963-1965

THE NECESSITY OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE FROM QURANIC PERSPECTIVE

By
Mr. Murat YILMAZ *

(In the Name of God, The most Merciful, and The Most Compassionate)

First of all I would like thank you all for inviting us here and giving a chance to talk about tolerance from Islamic perspective. Let me begin my presentation with a prayer of the Prophet ^{with the} 

O Allah (God), join our hearts, mend our social relationship, guide us to the path of peace, bring us from darkness to light, save us from obscenities, outward or inward, and bless our ears, our eyes, our hearts, our wives, our children, and forgive us; You are the Forgiving, the Merciful. And make us grateful for your blessing and make us praise it while accepting it and give it to us in full.¹

This is the declaration of the Vatican II Council:

1. We as Christian Community have respect for Muslims.
2. They believe that there is only One Allah (God) who is Ever living, the Self-subsisting, Powerful, the Creator of the heavens and the earth and sent down a messenger to deliver His message for them.

* Academic Coordinator of Rumi Forum

¹-Sunan Abu-Davud, Book 3, Number 964; Narrated by Abdullah ibn Maswood

The Need For Communicating Tolerance

Tolerance is a manifestation of love that is uttered recklessly today and so it is adopted easily here and there. Some circles try to impose an abstract and unbalanced understanding of tolerance by confusing people about Islam and awakening suspicion in their hearts. It should be difficult to reconcile with humanism the strange behaviour of those who murder innocent people or even, more horrible are those who put some supposedly religious people in their forefront, and without even glancing at the people tears stand and watch. Every believer should follow the Prophet in communicating the truth. They should never give up conveying to people the principles of tolerance. Tolerance is indeed love for Islams universal principles, the consideration and idea of tolerance and love is very balanced. Oppressors and aggressors have denied this aspect of tolerance just as love, tolerance and mercy shown to oppressors makes them to violate the right of the people prophet said "Help others whether they are oppressors by making than stop their oppression (to others)" by peace love, humanity justice and above all tolerance. The lesson Islam perches in inherent in its very name ie peace for all and it is possible only when we believe and practice tolerance.

The Quran enjoins upon the Muslims to live in peace with non-muslims if the also desires peace. The relation between Abyssinia (Habashah حبشة) and Islami State of Medina clearly illustrates the validity of this principle ¹.

Allah says in Surah Hamim Sajdah:

﴿سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ﴾

Islam sought to establish peaceful relations with other states based on reciprocity and mutual respects for each others rights. In Islam, tolerance and not conflict, is the basis of relations between states. Islam respects the right of state to independent existence and preserve their sovereignty. Sovereignty is the national right of every group of people. Islam does not allow a muslim to fight except in the event of infringement of religion, human rights and dignity. Allah says: 'Fulfill the covenants and break not your Oaths after asservation of than, and after you have made Allah surety over you Lo! Allah knoweth what you do'. This shows the insistence by God on the strict observance of the covenants which have been considered sacrosanct. Most important of the covenants is one made by Allah whose fulfillment is mandatory ².

Humanism is one of the main uttered and needed issues because it flourish love which is nested in our belief, a realm of the heart that never wishers. Love is the strongest base of relationship among individuals in the family, society and nation universal love shows is the most dominant factor for existence. The exchange of love from existence to humanity and from one creature to another takes place subconsciously because divine will and willing completely dominates those creatures that have no will power.

¹- Sura Hamëem Al-Sajdah 53

²-Ibid.

companions and other people. His conduct as a husband, father, trader and judge and head of a state fully confirms the principles and manner given by him in these areas of life. And likewise his code of conduct for a ruler, educator, military commander and statesman is fully confirmed by his practice in all these positions. There is absolutely no difference in his morals, character and teachings and his practice in the various fields of human activity. Everything he said is proved by his practice, as attested by the Quran. He condemned those people who preach to others what they do not practice themselves.

His lifestyle is not only perfect but fully comprehensive, covering every aspect and every field of human activity. It offers guidance to all men and women and it seems that in the presence of the complete and perfect life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him ﷺ), the purity and nobility of his thoughts and perfection of his morals and manners, there is no place for any other guide ¹.

﴿وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾

The Qur'an is of Guidance for mankind, and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Prophet of Allah who preached these principles and morals to the people. Once someone asked A'isha about the morals of the Prophet, she replies, "The Qur'an is his morals". The Prophet, he fully demonstrated the teachings of the Quran by his own perfect life. He was indeed the Qur'an in example; the perfect example for mankind the perfect example for peace humanity justice and above the tolerance ².

Allah Says in Surah Al Imran:

﴿لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ﴾

¹ - Sura Al-Qalam 4

² - Sura Al-Imran 164

him ﷺ), were observed in practice and by the people in their practical life. Just presentation of a utopian ideology and philosophy of life without any roots in human relationships tolerance is simply not enough. This is because a perfect and ideal life cannot be measured in terms of slogans, sermons and moral ideals, but only on term of practical achievements and pious actions.

The life style of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him ﷺ) is marvelously preserved. All historians accept that fact that the Muslims have preserved the record of the life of their Prophet. The Scholars of Seerah, Hadith, Mugazi, history and biographers have worked hard to assimilate and assemble the teachings, practices and traditions practices of the Prophet and have spread and transferred them to future generations in remarkable way. This preaching and spreading of the words and deeds of the Prophet was fully in line with his own instructions: "Preach what you hear me say. Also let those who see and hear me take it upon themselves to communicate my words to others and preach to their children, relatives and friends. Even the non Muslim of Islam admit and confirm that every word and every act of the Prophet has been recorded and preserved.

It is a part of human nature to look to someone, higher and noble for guidance, to make him one's pattern or model. This chosen one is the becomes one's sample, nay. One usually looks up to Maulana', a 'Pir' a 'Shaikh' or 'Imam' or to someone who has attained the position of a national or an international leader or hero. But none of these highly placed 'models' have a lasting place or serve as lasting samples.

Prophet Muhammad: (peace be upon him ﷺ) thoughts, precepts tolerance and principles are fully tested in term of practicality. His character and conduct were fully put to the test in his life at Makkah and then at Medinah, passing through varying situations of extreme persecution and oppression and then wars and open hostilities and ultimate triumph over all evil forces, but he showed no signs of pessimism or frustration at the former or pride and boastfulness at the later. The nobility and greatness of his character and teaching is fully borne out by his actions and practices at home with his family and outside among his

The life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him ﷺ) is a perfect model for mankind to follow to emulate, to attain goodness, piety and success in their personal as well as social life. The Quran describes the personality of this perfect man in these words, "And you are example on an excellent standard of character"¹

Qura'an Text:

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

In the words of the Quran, the perfectness of Prophet (peace be upon him ﷺ) character and personality stands as a model for all mankind. He possessed the best and the noblest qualities of a perfect man. He was like a jewel illuminating the dark environment with his radiant personality, perfect example and glorious Message of Allah.

Finally Prophet Muhammad: (peace be upon him ﷺ) life is seen in the light of comprehensiveness and Practicality one of the essential ingredients of an ideal life-style. According to this essential element, Prophet's example must cover every aspect of our life, and cater to the needs and demands of people of all abilities, capacities, temperaments, inclinations, attachments and devotion in the spiritual as well as material worlds. So what is required for humans is: first a code of life containing noble, perfect and practical principles governing human relationships, tolerance at all levels, material as well as spiritual; second, a perfect example of a human being who has passed through various stages of life and left an ideal life-style as a guide for all mankind in all field of life. It was Muhammad (peace be upon him ﷺ) alone gave to mankind fundamentals of morality and manners and then showed by his own conduct and practice their practicability to various situations in human life and that what tolerance means.

Now considering the point of practicality, we have to see how the principles, teachings and tenants of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon

¹ - Sura Al-Ahzab 21

which divides humanity into water tight compartments is hostile to one another and a philosophy of life which pretends to create a classless society by annihilation of all other classes by a chosen class through class struggle is definitely based on enmity and hatred and not on tolerance. Such a philosophy of life destroys the man and nourishes the evil within the society. The philosophy of Islam is a philosophy of unity¹.

Allah Says in Sura Hamim Sajdah

﴿وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ (٣٤) وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ﴾

harmony and balance that is tolerance. The Quranic wisdom deprecates development of one or some aspects of human existence at the cost of others but indeed on harmonious and balanced development of all the aspects of life and this is what the tolerance is.

Islam, as taught by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him ﷺ), offers guidance not only for the individuals but also for the whole mankind. Islam is not only concerned about the life of any particular nation, but also about the universal and global civilization. It prohibits states and individuals from being involved in conspiracy against other nations and individuals. It rather expects nation, states and individuals to co-operate with one another, promote interests of the whole mankind. The Quran Says, "Hold fast the rope of Allah and not be divided"².

Allah Says in Sura Al Imran:

﴿وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ﴾

¹- Sura Hameem Al-Sajdah 34,35.

²- Sura Al-Imran 103.

Islam deals with individual as well as social and collective organism. In other words, "Islam is the divine set of doctrine for man's being and becoming". In order that Islam may re-assume its grandeur and its progressive role, human endeavors and values of Islam must be rediscovered and put in modern setting by the spiritual talents of philosophers, scientists, sociologists and historians. Tolerance and peace are the essence of Islam. Islam does not suppress or oppress human nature but fully recognizes the biological aspects of the body, mind and intellect and induces harmonious development of all the faculties of man so that the ego might get full satisfactions of his natural needs without infringing upon similar rights of others. Faith in the Oneness of God is meaning less if it does not mean the Oneness of mankind "We did not create man except as one nation"¹.

Allah Says in Surah Room:

﴿وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ
بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾

Is the message of the Holy Quran. If God has created man as one Nation, man has no right to create arbitrary distinctions between man and man. Equality of man which Islam preaches, is not, artificial but is social. There can not be any distinction on the relation as some are born black, some white, some are tall and some short, some are diligent and some idle, some are intelligent and some are ignorant and some are gentle and some are arrogant. Quite naturally, some by their personal dieting acquire distinctions over others, but such distinctions, according to the teaching of the Quran, are not permitted to interfere with or to disturb in any manner or degree the social equality of man.

The brotherhood of man as proclaimed by Islam, is universal and not confined to any particular class or creed. A philosophy of human existence which is concerned mainly with satisfaction of immediate material needs of the flesh can hardly make equality of man real. A philosophy of life

¹ - Sura Al-Room 21

The principals of force, equality and social justice restrained by the rule of Shariah and realized through collective life provide the basic ideological salting in which the key political concepts of Islam i.e. Ummah, or the community Shariah and Khuruj can effectively operate.

Islam is universal religion of peace. It is a religion of nature. It governs every aspect of human life, whether religious, intellectual morals, practical or any other. It does not confine itself merely to purifying the spiritual and the moral life rather it extends its domain to the entire gamut of life. It intends to mould the individual and socio-political life of the people in such a way that the kingdom of Allah has really been established and this is it, dominant characteristic. Islam satisfies the humaneness of human being. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him ﷺ) has the unique distinction of founding a strong and enduring mono theistic religion based on spiritualism and absolute moral code and ethical doctrines. Allah perfected "Islam as a religion and Allah has chose Muhammad (peace be upon him ﷺ) for it."¹

Allah Says in Surah Al Imran:

﴿إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ﴾

Islam is a cosmopolitan religion. The Quran has emphasized, "these people are a single nation, Allah raised Prophet as because of Allah's news and as warrens".

Islam recognizes a unity of purpose in all religions, it declares that essential teachings of all the divine religions are identical, that truth is not the monopoly of a single religion but is contained in all holy books and has been preached to all nations in all ages. Islam is not a religion of mere theology or a set of dogmas and rituals, as some people wrongly believe. It is a divine faith which governs man in his individual as well as his collective existence.

¹ - Sura Al-Imran 19

there be any treaty for the others) When they have the upper hand on you, they regard not pact, nor honor in respect at you They satisfy you with their mouths while their hearts refuse. And most of them are wrongly doers. But Allah asks Muslims to remain true to the treaty they made at the inviolable place of worships. How can there be a treaty with Allah and His messenger and the idolaters save those with whom ye made a treaty at the inviolable place of worships? So long as they are true to you, be true to them. Lo! Allah Loveth those who keep their duty.¹

Allah sys in Surah Ra'ad:

﴿الَّذِينَ يُوفُونَ بَعْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَنْقُضُونَ الْمِيثَاقَ﴾

The binding force of the treaty has been so much emphasized that Muslims are forbidden to interfere against the non-Muslims with whom they have the treaty even on behalf of the Muslims seeking help in the matter of religion.²

Allah sys in Surah Isra'a:

﴿وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا﴾

Nevertheless, they are at liberty to government to their help in case there is non treaty between them and the non-Muslim would be released from their treaty obligation. Should the non-Muslims break their Pledges offer this treaty and assail your religion, then light the heads of disbelief – Lo! They have no binding oaths.³

Allah sys in Surah Fatir:

﴿وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ جَاءَهُمْ نَذِيرٌ لَّيَكُونُنَّ أَهْدَىٰ مِنْ إِحْدَى الْأُمَمِ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ نَذِيرٌ مَّا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا﴾

¹ -Sura Al-Raad 20

² -Sura Al-Isra'a 34

³ -Sura Fatir 42

every group of people. "Fulfill the covenanted of Allah when not your oaths after asseveration 'of them, and ye have made Allah surety over you. Lo! Allah knoweth what you do".

Allah says in Sura Al-Nesa:

﴿إِلَّا الَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ إِلَى قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُم مِّيثَاقٌ أَوْ جَاءُوكُمْ حَصِرَتْ صُدُورُهُمْ أَنْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ أَوْ يُقَاتِلُوا قَوْمَهُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَسَلَّطَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَقَاتِلُوكُمْ فَإِنْ اعْتَزَلُوكُمْ فَلَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ وَأَلْقَوْا إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَمَ فَمَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيلًا ۝¹

Islam does not permit a Muslim to fight except in the event of infringement of justice and human rights, and dignity.

Muslims are explicitly forbidden to start hostilities against those who do not make war against them. If the Muslims have genuine grounds to fear that the non-Muslims are planning to subvert the treaty they made with them, then they are allowed to abrogate it. "And if thou fearest treachery from any folk, then throw back to them (their treaty) fairly Lo! Allah Loveth not the treacherous ²".

Allah Says in Sura Al-Touba:

﴿إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَحَدًا فَأَتِمُّوا إِلَيْهِمْ عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَى مُدَّتِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ۝

This verse refers to the treachery of Banu Qainu Qa who in flagrant violation of the treaty,provoked an incident which led to war between the Muslims and Jews. According to the Quran if the non-Muslim are so inimically disposed towards the Muslims that they do not honour the pacts and pledges which they made with them, it would be ideal to accept any treaty that could successfully work in these circumstance s; "How (can

¹ - Sura Al-Nesa 90

² - Sura Al-Touba 4

Islam uses a term Ummah for its followers which form a global community, or a world- wide fellowships that transcends the existing multiplicity of nation-state and is applicable with the framework of a commonwealth of Muslim states. The Islamic Political theory is based on the fundamental theological doctrines of the Quran. The political theology is based on Quranic doctrines of monotheism, cosmology, Allah says:

﴿ إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ۝¹ ﴾

Eschatology and ethics. The Islamic political theory forwarded in these primary concepts centers around the questions of who governs whom and how. Islam is uses the terms as "Rabb رب", "Mulk ملك", "Risalah رسالة", "Khilifah خلافة", "Shariah شريعة", "Qiyamah قيامة", Jaza جزاء and Junah. This way reflected Ummah, wilayah ولاية, Khilafat خلافة, Amr bil-maruf wa nahi an-almunkr أمر بالمعروف ونهي عن المنكر, Shura Shura Iftihad, ijma and Al-Khuraj. If we see the origins of Ummah, in the light of Quran, Ummah was fundamentally a religious community based on a common faith on the oneness of God. Divine Guidance through Prophet Mohammad (ﷺ) and shariah (Divine of laws) ,laid down the foundations of the Ummah of Madina which ultimately grew into a gigantic Islamic state. The Ummah wahidah أمة واحدة (unity of mankind) being founded on a universal belief-system is aimed at restoring the ideological unity of mankind.

In Islam peaceful relations is not a matter of political expediency, it is a positive concept. Islam respects the right to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. No state has the right to dominate or impose its sovereignty upon the other for the sovereignty is the legitimate right of

¹ Sura Al-Ahzab 35

emphasizes "the oneness of God" and says "Mankind were one community"¹. And in Quran Allah says "Mankind were one community then they differed".² God also recognizes the existence of various communities in the form of tribes and nations with whom they are identified. Allah says"

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ
لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾

"Mankind Lo! We have created you made you nations and tribes that you may know each other Lo! The noblest of you in the sight of God is one who feareth him."³ or who is pious.

In the light of these verses, the mankind remains a single community, its division into tribes and nation is natural phenomenon. Islam recognizes unity in diversity. However, the Quran enjoins upon the Muslim to live in "peace with non-Muslims if non-Muslims also desire peace."

Qura'n Text:

﴿وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا...﴾⁴

The relationships of Medina and Abyssinia (Habsha) demonstrates this principle. Even in the course of their conquest of the colonies of the Byzantine Empire, the victorious Muslim armies did not interfere with the African states. Islam's emphasis to establish peaceful relations with other states shows the tolerance in Islam. Islam advocates reciprocity and respects for each others faiths and ensure rights. Peaceful relations is not a political expediency, it is a doctrine of tolerance. Islam believes in Peace and not war as basis of relations between states.

¹- Sura Al-Hujurat 13.

²- Ibid

³-Ibid

⁴-Sura Al-Anfal 61

The Need For Communicating Tolerance

and women. These conflicts can be resolved by interfaith dialogue and a step toward tolerance, in forgetting the past, ignoring polemical arguments and giving precedence to common points and bringing some attitude charges in the arabian west toward Islam. "The faith of Abraham, Hanifa revived with Mohammad (PBUH ﷺ)". Islam has a positive almost prophetic mission in the Post-Christian world for "Islam is the religion of peace, harmony justice tolerance. It is simply not a religion of the philosophers, but faith in the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Ismail noses jowls. Islam Symbioses divine guidance. Islam peace love, compassion, tolerance. Islam accords the greatest value to human life. Tolerance, which we use in place of respect and mercy, generosity and forbearance, is the most essential element of Islam. This the only way toward solving, long interfaith energy-arrogance-ignorance.

The socio-economic system of Islam is based on a postulated normative behavior characterized by honesty integrity and benevolence, which are derived from the value-structure of Islam. The traditional man is replaced by a man of Islamic social values. One does not have to be very imaginative or analytical to see that a society blessed by honest, responsible and benevolent individual, will ensure a better quality of life. There are two essential and primary ingredients of the classical Islamic socio-political theory, which are Ummah and the Shariah. These concepts have been elaborated in the Holy Quran.

The socio-political history of Islam is based on the oral traditions recorded by the traditionalists, the Prophets Biographies (Sirah سيرة) and records of Prophetic wars. The Islamic thought should be studied in environmental situations, social realities and political background. It is necessary to relate facts to contemporary systems of ideas, thoughts and institutions prevailing in the neighboring civilizations since cultural interaction is a primary source of progress. In earlier period, lack of speedy communication, ideas moved slowly from one part of the globe to the others with the migration of trade caravans and available means were instrumental in the steady transformation of ideas and institutions. To understand the basic religious philosophy of Islam, one must have a correct view of Islamic institutions. Islam is the only religion of tolerance which recognizes non Muslim nations, inspite of the fact that the Quran

THE NEED FOR COMMUNICATING TOLERANCE AS STRESSED BY ISLAM

By
Dr. Abida Perveen *

ABSTRACT

Mankind faces unprecedented threats to its well-being and perhaps even to its survival. There are more than 1.2 billion Muslim people in the world and there is an urgent need to produce for the burgeoning global population. Poor land use practices, oil erosion and deforestation are degrading the natural resources on which production depends. Social systems are also in disarray almost everywhere. The western countries are getting richer and Muslim are becoming poorer. Extreme ideologies, suicide-terrorism, human rights violations, diseases, Mental illness and other pervasive phenomenon are tearing Muslim social family fabric apart. Massive changes are needed if we are to avert the threats to the future Umma or the community sustainable development is a major challenge of present century. Central tolerance and informed communities. The only way we can work for this divine-piety is through wisdom, good reasoning tolerance communication. Communication provide the means for creating awareness, consensus building, generating the processes of change and development for making informed decisions and for resolving conflicts in line with the Quranic wisdom.

The root cause is the materialist worldview, which severely limits once religious influence in contemporary social life. The result is the disturbed balance between humanity, nature and within individual men

* Assistant Professor, Sheikh Zayed Islamic Centre, University of Karachi

References

1. Boundaries of Differences From the Discourses of Mufti Mahmood-Hasan Gangohi
2. Hadith and Sunnah – Ideals and Realities –
3. Taqi Uddin Nadvi Muzahiri, The Great Mohadditheen & Their Contribution
4. Muhammad ibn Yusuf, Imam Abu Hanifah (Uqudul-Juman)
5. The Muwatta of Imam Muhammad
6. Amin Ahsan Islahi, Juristic Differences and how to resolve them in an Islamic State
7. Sunan Abi Dawud
8. Tirmizi Sharif
9. Shibli Numani, Sirat-un-Nabi
10. Shah Waliullah, Hujjatullah Al-Baaligah
11. Abdur Rasheed Numani, Tareekh Tadween Hadith (In Urdu)
12. Suhaib Hasan, An Introduction To The Science of Hadith

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal was more inclined in the preservation of ahadith.

Therefore it can be seen in the light of these ten reasons that the Four Imams did not differ because of the general methodology – since each of them believed in following the Qur'an and Sunnah. Rather it was in their way of interpretation. However with all these differences; they did not react angrily towards each other. Rather they were like believers with mercy towards each other, and today it is imperative on us to follow their ways. For indeed! One should not think that his school of thought is always correct and the other schools of thoughts are wrong. Rather the balance approach should be that his school of thought ruling is presumed to be correct with the possibility of being incorrect and the other schools of thoughts ruling can have the possibility of being correct. For verily on the Day of Judgment the secret of whose school of thought was correct will not be disclosed!

More ever on the Day of Judgment, Allah will not disgrace any of the four Imams to whom he favored with the knowledge of the religion. Therefore to delve into such a thing as to whose school of thought is correct is to waste one's life. Rather as believers of the Qur'an and Sunnah and followers of the footsteps of the pious predecessors we should unite and spread the tenets of Islam which the Messengers (peace be upon them) had propagated.

And, indeed, all Praises belong to Allah, Lord of the Worlds

"If you collect the sayings of Ibrahim an-Nakh'i, his comrades and contemporaries out of Imam Muhammad Kitabul-Athar, Jamie by Abdur-Razzak and Musannaf by Abu Bakr bin Shaybah, and make a comparison thereof with the sayings of Imam Abu Hanifah, you will arrive at the result that in his ijtihad, he rarely departs from the line of Ibrahim an-Nakh'i school; and ever if he does depart, he confines himself strictly to the intellectual field of the jurists of Kufah."

8- Classification of rulings

The Ahnaaf have created difference between wajib and fard. Wajib is that act which is reported from khabaree-wahid hadith and whose evidence is assumption. Where else, Fard is that act whose ruling is derived from such evidence which is definite and cannot be doubted i.e., mutawatir متواتر. Other madhabs do not have such ruling

9 - Understanding hadith differently

In the narration of Muwatta by Imam Muhammad it is narrated that Umar (may Allah be pleased with him رضي الله عنه) said: "It is not right for a woman to be married unless with the permission of her guardian, or a member of her family of sound judgment, or the ruler." Though this hadith shows that marriage without a guardian is invalid, however Imam Abu Hanifah took the meaning of this hadith differently. Imam Muhammad narrates that Abu Hanifah said: "if she places herself in a position of equality and does not neglect her dowry, then the marriage is permissible." Further Imam Muhammad writes: "A part of his argument was the saying of Umar in this hadith. '...or a member of her family of sound judgment' in that this is not a guardian and yet the marriage is permissible..."

10- Capacity in Ijtihad

Since all these Imams had different intellectual level and way of thinking it was natural for them to derive different rulings. For example, Imam Abu Hanifah was more concerned in Fiqh, where else

After narrating from Imam Malik, Imam Muhammad writes: "It has been narrated to us that wiping over the turban was practiced, and then abandoned. This is the verdict of Abu Hanifah and our fuqaha in general."

5- Hadith did not reach

When this was possible (and did happen) with eminent companions such as Abu Bakr and Umar (may Allah be pleased with both of them رضي الله عنهما) then is it not possible that some ahadith did not reach the four Imams? It narrated by Abu Dawud that once a grandmother of a deceased person came to Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him رضي الله عنه) and claimed a right in inheritance. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him رضي الله عنه) said that he could not find either in the Book of God or the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that she was entitled to any share, but that he would make enquiries about it. In this search, Mughirah (may Allah be pleased with him رضي الله عنه) gave evidence that the Prophet (peace be upon him) gave a grandmother of deceased one-sixth out of the property and Muhammad bin Maslamah (may Allah be pleased with him رضي الله عنه) came before Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him رضي الله عنه) to corroborate the narration by Mughirah (may Allah be pleased with him رضي الله عنه). Therefore judgment was accordingly given in favor of the grandmother of the deceased.

6- Differences in understanding the Arabic language

According to scholars of Shafi'i school of thought touching a non-mahram nullifies wudu. They present the following verse as their evidence: "Or if you have touched women." However, the Ahnaaf consider the word 'touched' as a relationship between man and woman as touch can also imply intimate relation.

7-following the scholars of their own land and their line of thinking

Shah Wali Ullah writes¹:

¹ حجة الله البالغة -

2 - Mursal ahadith accepted by some Imams while rejected by other Imams.

To illustrate an example, we can see that in Muwatta of Imam Malik many narrations from Imam Malik are mursal. Since he accepted such narrations he would see no harm in accepting them. Imam Abu Hanifah also held the same opinion as Imam Malik. He accepted the mursal hadith whether or not it was supported by another hadith. However Imam Shafi'i would not accept mursal ahadith. Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 241) accepted mursal and (other) da'if ¹ (weak) ahadith if nothing opposing them was found regarding a particular issue, preferring them to qiyas (analogical deduction).

3 - Concerning the status of Companion

Among the Ahnàf scholars a principle of Usool al-Fiqh (which is not excepted universally) is that those narrations of Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) which are in agreement with analogy are adopted and what are in disagreement with analogy, one will see if the ahadith have been accepted by the community, only then would it be adopted². The source was Ibrahim an-Nakhi, who would not adopt all the ahadith of Hazrat Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him). Hafiz Dhahabi reports in his "Mizan al-Itidaal" ميزان الاعتدال that Ibrahim explained his motivations by arguing that Abu Hurayrah was not a scholar of fiqh.³

4- Hadith abrogated

An example can be seen concerning the issue of raising hands during prayers. According to the Ahnaaf احناف this was done initially, however later it was abrogated. Another example can be seen under the section of "Wiping over the Turban and the Headscarf" in Muwatta.

¹-Da'if means those ahadith which are not severely weak, since Imam Ahmad classified ahadith into sahih and da'if rather than sahih, hasan and da'if.

²-.See Usool al-Sarkhasee أصول السرخسي

³-However this point is rejected by majority of the Ahnaf scholars and scholars of different madhabs

Furthermore, it is narrated that once Imam Shafi'i asked Imam Malik about Imam Abu Hanifah. He replied:

"Glory belongs to Allah! I have not come across anyone like him. His knowledge was of such a caliber that if he claimed that this pillar is made of gold, he will logically prove it to you.

Imam Shafi'i would say: "I have not seen a greater faqih than Imam Abu Hanifah."

"ما رأيت أفقه من الإمام أبي حنيفة رحمه الله"

About Imam Shafi'i, Imam Muhammad had said:

"Scholars will discuss and state hadith in the language of Shafi'i. Also, Imam Shafi'i would say: "Whatever I gained from Muhammad is equal to the load of a camel."

Likewise, Imam Shafi'i would respect Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal and would command him to tell any hadith which was authentic.

However with all their respect towards each other, they were a man of different intellectual standings. Hence it was natural for them to disagree with each other – while fully respecting each other viewpoints

Reasons for Differences

- 1- A particular narrator of hadith was considered weak by an Imam while other Imams thought him Reliable to illustrate an example, we can mention Jabir al-Jufi. Though many scholars of hadith considered him reliable – including Shubah¹ and Sufyan Thawri and they narrated from him. However Imam Abu Hanifah criticized him strongly and abandoned him². Therefore any hadith narrated through him would be criticized by Imam Abu Hanifah and hence would not be accepted.

¹-Ibn Ulayyah said (narrating) from Shu'bah: "Jabir was utterly truthful in hadith."

²-Hafiz Tirmizi in his Sunan narrates on the authority of Ham'ani that he heard Imam Abu Hanifah saying: "I have not witnessed a more deceitful person than Jabir J'ufi..."

"I swear I seek the blessing of Abu Hanifah and come to his grave everyday." (Meaning as a visitor).

Another example can be seen in the light of the reaction of Imam Malik. Once, Caliph Haroon al-Rashid هارون الرشيد sought permission from Imam Malik to issue Muwatta موطأ as the only book that would constitute the basis for all the judicial decisions. However, Imam Malik replied:

"Leader of the Believers, please do not do that. So far as the details of Shariah are concerned, the Companions of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) held different opinions. They had traveled far and wide in the land, and through them, people have adopted different practices."

Then another example which shows their respect towards each other is with reference to Imam Abu Yusuf. On one occasion he took his bath in a public bath before leading Friday prayers. When the congregation had dispersed, it was discovered that there was a dead mouse in the well attached to the bath. When this was brought to his notice he was undisturbed and simply remarked:

"No harm. Today we are supposed to have acted after the creed of the people of Madinah."

Likewise, though Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal believed in performing a fresh wudu وضوء after epistaxis and venesection, he was once asked as to whether he would pray behind an Imam who had suffered bleeding of a certain part of the body, but had not performed fresh ablution? He replied:

"How can I refuse?" – Since this was the opinion of Imam Malik and Saeed bin Musayyib سعيد بن المسيب.

Also, they would praise each other knowledge. Imam Malik when asked about Imam Abu Hanifah would reply:

"Yes, I saw him and I found him to be a man of such caliber that if he claims that this pillar is made of gold, he will prove it to you."

But why did differences crop up in rulings among the Four Sunni Sects? After all were they not teachers and students of each other? Imam Malik ¹ greatly benefited from Imam Abu Hanifah books. Imam Shafi'i was the student of Imam Malik ² and Imam Muhammad ³. Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal was the student of Imam Abu Yusuf⁴ and Imam Shafi'i ⁵.

However, on the onset it should be understood and kept in mind that the founders of the four schools of thoughts were far removed from prejudice and narrow-mindedness towards each other or other scholars. We have on record that once Imam Shafi'i offered his morning prayers near the graveyard of Imam Abu Hanifah and did not recite the Qanoot prayers that day – with respect to Abu Hanifah view that Qanoot قنوت need not be said on Fajr. Also, Khatib Baghdadi narrates Ali ibn Maymun as saying: 'I heard As-Shafi'i say:

However Nawawi in the commentary of Sahih Muslim writes: 'If something (i.e. agreement) is a mercy it is not necessary for it's opposite to be the opposite of mercy. No-one makes this binding, and no-one even says... Allah the Exalted said: "And of His mercy He has made night for you so that you would rest in it," and He has named night a mercy: it does not necessarily ensue from this that the day is a punishment."

¹- Qadi Abul Abbas Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Abi Al-Awaam with a continuous narration from Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad Daraawardi narrates that Imam Malik would consult the books of Imam Abu Hanifah and would greatly benefit from them. (Tarikh Tadween Hadith, pg. 91)

²-Imam Shafi'i at the age of 13 went to Imam Malik who told him: "Your heart is pure and shining. Do not waste it through sins. Make piety your mark and a day will come when you will become a most learn man." He recited Muwatta before Imam Malik.

³-Kati Baghdadi narrates from Imam Shari's that: "I have never seen a stout person more intelligent than Muhammad bin al-Has an."

⁴-When Imam Ahmad bin handball started his studies in ahadith, he first of all went to Imam Abu Yusuf then to other scholars of Islam

⁵-Ahmad is related by his students Abu Taib and Humayd ibn Zanjuyah to have said: "I never saw anyone adhere more to hadith than ash-Shafi'i.

DIFFERENCES OF THE FOUR SUNNI SCHOOLS OF THOUGHTS AND THEIR REASONS

By
Mr. Syed Hammad Ali

All praises belong to Allah, Lord of the worlds and peace and blessings be upon His Last Messenger. To Proceed:

It is natural that differences should crop up in certain issues on which the Qur'an and Sunnah have remained silent¹. However, differences in opinions are mercy for the followers of Islam².

¹-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud have narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) sent Mu'adh ibn Jabal (may Allah be pleased with him) to Yemen and appointed him to give fatwa by ijtihad if the Qur'an and Sunnah was silent.

²-According to some Muhadditheen the hadith which mentions: "Differences of opinions..." is weak or fabricated i.e., al-Silsilah al-Da'eefah, 11. However, Al-Bayhaqi in "Al-Madkhal" and Az-Zarkashi in "Tadhkirah fi al-ahadith al-mushtaharah" relate al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr as saying: "The differences among the Companions of Muhammad (peace be upon him) are a mercy for Allah's servants. Ibn Qudamah al-Hanbali said in "Al-Aqa'id": "The difference in opinion in the Community is a mercy, and their agreement is a proof. Ibn Hazm Az-Zahari says: "Difference of opinion in my Community is a mercy' is the most perverse saying because if difference were mercy, agreement would be anger, and it is impossible for a Muslim to say this, because there can only be either agreement, or difference, and there can only be either mercy, or anger possible (al-Ihkam fi usul al-ahkam).