

Peculiarity of the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ in Training Pattern— A Qur'anic Review

By: Sheikh Muhammad Ishtiaq *

To serve Allah and establish His Commands by bidding fair-deeds and forbidding unfair-deeds was the mission of all the Ambya' عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ [i.e., Prophets] and Rusul' عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ [i.e., Messengers], who came in every epoch and in all lands. After an accomplishment of the lineage of Prophetic series, from Adam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ to Muhammad ﷺ, this responsibility transmitted to the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ. Hence, the aim and objective of the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ is same as of the Prophets' عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ of the past ages.

It is affirmed by the Holy Qur'an and Ah}adith that this Ummah was created and sent in this world for the purpose of fulfilling the obligations of the work of Da'wah [i.e. inviting people to the message of Allah ﷻ] and Tabligh [i.e. propagating the message of Allah ﷻ] and that every individual of the Muslim Ummah is the Deputy of Ambya' عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ, hence, therefore, is responsible to convey the Divine Message—Message of Islam—to the people and nations of the entire world.

Training pattern of Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ is noticeably different from the past nations. To this Ummah, detail instructions regarding work of Da'wah has been given prior to the detail commandments concerning worship and other obligations of Deen. In other words, teachings and training of Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ have been done on the pattern of Ambya' عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ and Rusul' عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ. This notion is also supported by the theme of the Holy Qur'an, which spells out to the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ repeatedly—i.e., the duty of the Ambya' عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ, their way of preaching, their patients, their ardent desire for the Hidayah of their people as well as apathetic or offensive attitudes of their nation against their sympathetic and sincere admonitions. This theme infers that now the work of Ambya' عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَامُ—the work of Da'wah—is transmitted to this Ummah—the Ummah of Muhammad ﷺ.

*Lecturer: Bahria University [Karachi Campus] iqofpk@yahoo.com

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22. *Ibid* The Gospel of Luke 12:49, p1098
23. *Ibid* 12; 51, p.1098.
24. Esposito, John L. (2002). *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press p.119
25. Muhammad Abdu (NG). *Tafseer Al Manar.(Arabic)* Beirut: Darul Marifa Vol. 4, pp. 82-84
26. *Ibid*
27. Musnad Al Shab Al Qadai, Narrated by the the authority of Anas bin Malik, See Al Shamilah Software of Hadith, part 1, p310.
28. Abu Abdullah, Muhammad bin Abdullah. (NG). *Mishkatul Masabeeh.(Arabic)* Kitab Al Adab, Bab Al Shafqat wa Rahmah. Lahore: Maktaba Rahmania. Part 2, p439.
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32. *Ibid* Babno. 33. Hadith no.3052, p548.
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17. Ibid Vol. 6, p146
18. Ibid Vol. 3, p340.
19. Ibid Vol.4, pp 661-662
20. Ibid Vol. 3, p119.

King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, called on a “dialogue” among 57 Muslim heads of States in Makkah, four years ago. In November 2008, Senior Vatican and Islamic Scholars had a dialogue to improve relationships between the world’s largest faiths. Pope Benedict xvi addressed the participants in the first Seminar of the Catholic-Muslim forum on Nov 6’ 2008 for greater understanding between Muslims and Christians. U.S. President Obama has started seriously talking about a dialogue between the two faiths keeping in mind all the aspects that can lead to reconciliation. As a Democratic presidential candidate Obama said in his speech in Berlin on August 24, 2008. “Tear down the wall of racism”. He spoke about breaking down the walls (like the literal Berlin wall of the past) between peoples of different religions. U.S. President Obama said in Cairo, Egypt, on 4th June, 2009. “Islam is a part of Europe and there is a mosque in every state of our Union”.

Conclusion: We cannot have a different world for people of separate faiths. We have to live together in this world, so we must come together to save the planet. Islam respects diversity. Dialogue is the best way to communicate with people of other faiths. Islamic teachings show that any human being, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, is valuable. As far as Islam is concerned there is no force or compulsion in religion. Islamic Law is based on dialogue and reconciliation and not on discrimination, intolerance and violence. Building solid bridges between Muslims and Christians needs more substantial, honest and united efforts in order to demolish the ingrained prejudices against each other. We must appreciate the sensitivity of the current global situation and make honest and sincere endeavors to manage, minimize and resolve conflicts and ensure peace. The question still remains unanswered that why inspite of the permission of Sharia for dialogue, cooperation with Christians and many other efforts for global harmony, the gulf between the Muslim and the Western world continues to grow.

PLACE OF MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

9. Christians had good positions in an Islamic State like John of Damascus held positions of prominence in the royal courts.(38)

General principles for holding dialogues: The Holy Quran not only issues a call to dialogue but also insists on the form it should take and the way in which it should be conducted. It should not simply be an exchange of information; it should also be a way of being and of speaking, an attitude. Allah says in the Holy Quran (16:125) "And discuss with them in the best way." Allah says (29: 46): "And do not argue with the people of the Book (Christian & Jews) except in the best manner". It means that dialogue must be with Christian and Jews in the most courteous manner.

Peace and Dialogue initiative in the world today:

This century hopefully will be called "The age of reconciliation and dialogue". Efforts have been made from prominent figures from Muslim and Christian camps like John L. Esposito and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, M. Fathullah Gulen all around the world to resolve differences at micro and macro levels. In October 2007 an open letter of 38 Muslim scholars and call from Muslim Religious Leaders to His Holiness Pope Benedict xvi and Leaders of Christian Churches, everywhere, states: "Muslims and Christians together make up well over half of the world's population. Without peace and justice between these two religious communities, there can be no meaningful peace in the world. The future of the world depends on peace between Muslims and Christians. The basis for this peace and understanding already exists. It is part of the very foundational principles of both faiths: love of the One God, and love of the neighbour. These principles are found over and over again in the sacred texts of Islam and Christianity. The Unity of God, the necessity of love for Him, and the necessity of love of the neighbour is thus the common ground between Islam and Christianity". When this report was launched initially 138 leading Islamic Scholars from all over the world became signatories. Later on 161 more prominent Muslim figures endorsed the publication. A total of 299 great Islamic scholars agreed to the ideas presented in this letter.

A very positive response was given by famous Christian theologians from all over the world such as Professor David Ford, Director, Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme, Dr Rowan Williams, The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, General Secretary, World council of Churches, The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), The Baptist World Alliance, Mennonite Church USA. Over 300 leading Christian scholars from Yale gave a very positive response when "A common World" was published as a full page advertisement in the "New York Times". (39)

Roots of Christian – Muslim dialogue and alliance in History:

In the contemporary era, religious and political pluralism has been a major issue in the Muslim world. The history of Christianity and Islam has been one of both conflict and coexistence. Esposito gave many positive examples of Muslim-Christian debate and dialogue some of them are:

1. Began in the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
2. The fifth Sunni chaliph, Muawiyyah (RA) (ruled 661-669), regularly sent invitations to the contending Jacobite and Maronite Christians to come to the royal court to discuss their differences.
3. Debates involving both Muslims and Jews occurred in Spanish Muslim courts, and a sixteenth-century interreligious theological discussions between Catholic priests and Muslim clerics was presided over by the Mughal Emperor Akbar. These debates were not always conducted between “equals” (indeed, many were held precisely in order to “prove,” as was also the case for dialogue initiated by Christians). The fact that the debate was permitted and encouraged, however, indicates some degree of open exchange between faiths, a significant stage of educational and cultural achievement in the Muslim world.
4. During the Crusades, despite their conflict, Muslims Tolerated the practice of Christianity-an example that was not emulated by the other side.
5. In the thirteenth century some treaties between Christian and Muslims granted Christians free access to sacred places then reoccupied by Islam.
6. The great Christian saint Francis of Assisi met the Muslim Leader Salah al-Din’s nephew Sultan al –Malik al-Kamil in 1219. The sultan granted freedom of worship to his more than thirty thousand Christian prisoners when hostilities were suspended, as well as offering them the choice of returning to their own countries or fighting in his armies.
7. The Ottoman Empire is a prime example of the positive treatment of religious minorities in a Muslim majority context. The Ottomans officially recognized four religiously based communities, known as *millet*: Greek Orthodox, Armenian Gregorian, Muslim and Jewish. Under the millet system, Islam assumed the prime position, but each other millet was placed under the authority of its own religious leaders and permitted to follow its own religious laws.
8. When Muslims conquered Byzantium, they were welcomed by some Christian sects and groups, who were persecuted as heretics by “official” Christianity, that is, Catholicism. Many Christians welcomed a Muslim rule that gave them more freedom to practice their faith and imposed lighter taxes. Despite initial fears, the Muslim conquerors proved to be far more tolerant than imperial Christianity had been, granting religious freedom to indigenous Christian churches and Jews.

vi) **Treaty with Jews and formation of constitution of Madina:** This Treaty was a good example of peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Jews, Christians and polytheists in Madina. The important step Muhammad (PBUH) took on arriving in Madinah was to conclude a treaty with the neighboring Jewish tribes for mutual help and defence of the city. The Charter of Madina was framed by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself and was called the first Constitution of Islam in the Islamic State of Madina. According to this Constitution the Muslims and non Muslims (Zimmis) were given the same equal rights of safety and protection. Even the political terminology used is the same for both Muslims and non-Muslims. (34) Esposito (2009) says: "Religiously, Islam proved a more tolerant religion, providing greater religious freedom for Jews and indigenous Christians"(35)

vii) **Correspondence with great emperors:** In his letters the Prophet (PBUH) interacted on an intercultural level, after 6th Hijra, he wrote letters to some rulers to the East & West inviting them to the faith of Islam. He sent emissaries to the Roman Emperor, the Persian Emperor, the ruler of Egypt, the King of Abyssinia and the Chief of Syria inviting them to Islam. Al Blazari mentions that Manazar Bin Sawi was the ruler of Bahrain. Muhammad (PBUH) sent a letter to him, inviting him to Islam. The letter had such a tremendous impact on him, that he embraced Islam almost immediately. A great number of the people of Bahrain also embraced Islam with great fidelity. (36)

viii) **Tolerance on the Conquest of Makkah:** On the occasion of the Conquest of Makkah the prophet (PBUH) entered Makkah with a force of ten to twelve thousand followers. There were many Makkans whom he (PBUH) could have justly taken revenge from on that day but he showed magnanimity, even to his worst enemies, by declaring General Amnesty. History has no record of such tolerant and magnanimous behavior. Armstrong (2006) said while analyzing the conquest of Makkah: "He (Muhammad PBUH) had no desire for bloody reprisal .Nobody was made to accept Islam nor do they seem to have felt any pressure to do so. Reconciliation was still Muhammad's objective". (37)

At the end of Prophetic mission the Holy Prophet (PBUH) reminded the people about equal political and legal status for non Muslim on the occasion of the last Sermon in 10th Hijra (632 AD) and said: "Your Lord is one and all human beings are Adam's children. An Arab is no better than a non-Arab. In return, a non-Arab is no better than an Arab. A red faced man is not better than a black faced one except in piety and Adam was created out of clay."