

# MUSLIMS & CHRISTIANS IN PAKISTAN: AN EXEMPLARY INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

By: Muhammad Shahid Habib

## **Introduction:**

*In a multi-religious set up, there has developed inter-faith dialogue, to promote peace and harmony among different nations. And it has become a need of every state to promote it. Pakistan, a Muslim state, has 4% of its population non-Muslim whose freedom and rights are truly guarded. The study aims to investigate how the Christians here are living peacefully and freely. It would also be observed what has contributed to the development of Muslim-Christian dialogue as well as what disturbs it. The steps taken by the government in this regard and the role of Church towards national development will also be discussed in what follows. The study follows a critical analysis of Muslim-Christian dialogue in the Pakistani context.*

## **Statement of the Problem:**

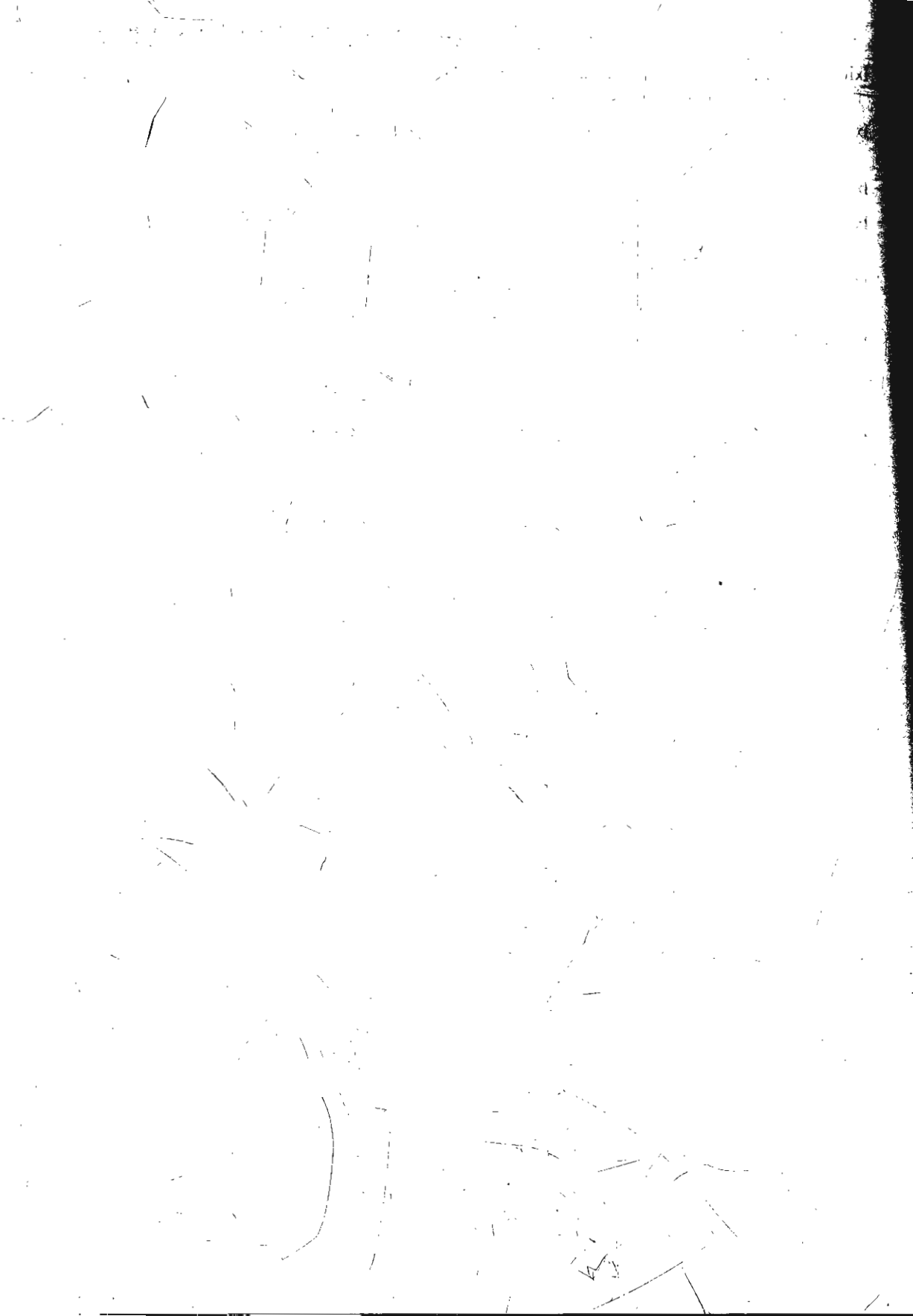
*In Pakistan, Christians have been enjoying full freedom and all of their rights are safeguarded by the state. The study searches for the elements of interfaith harmony between Muslims and Christians in Pakistan along with the problems hindering it.*

## **Significance of the Study:**

*The study carries a lot of significance for the promotion of interfaith dialogue in Pakistan. It would highlight the areas of collaboration and the problems there in for which Muslims and Christians can sort some way out both at state level and at individual level.*

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- lxiv Sayyid Qutb, 'Fi Zilalil-Quran', English Translated version, 'In the Shade of Quran' by Adil Silahi, Volume: X, Islamic Foundation, UK, 2003, pg. 142
- lxv Holy Qur'an: Surah Al-Hajj: 22: 73
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- lxviii Holy Qur'an: Surah Ai-Fatir: 35: 40
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- lxx Sayyid Qutb, 'Fi Zilalil-Quran', English Translated version, 'In the Shade of Quran' by Adil Silahi, Volume: XIV, Islamic Foundation, UK, 2003, pg. 187
- lxxi Holy Qur'an: Surah Al-Ambia: 21: 57-67
- lxxii Ahmad Raza, 'Kanz-ul-Imaan', English Translation 'The Treasure of Faith' by Aqib Farid, Tayyab Group of Industries, Faisalabad, Pakistan 2013, pg. 361

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- xlix Holy Qur'an: Surah As-Saaffaat: 37: 149-153
- l Ahmad Raza, 'Kanz-ul-Imaan', English Translation 'The Treasure of Faith' by Aqib Farid, Tayyab Group of Industries, Faisalabad, Pakistan 2013, pg. 516, 517
- li Holy Qur'an: Surah Saba: 34: 40, 41
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- lx Ahmad Raza, 'Kanz-ul-Imaan', English Translation 'The Treasure of Faith' by Aqib Farid, Tayyab Group of Industries, Faisalabad, Pakistan 2013, pg. 399
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- lxii Holy Qur'an: Surah R'aad: 13: 14

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The above incident gives logical description that how futile the idol worship is and it is all stupidity to worship these idols as these idols are themselves helpless.

Hence, the Holy Qur'an, very wisely addressed the most atrocious habit of Arabs which was penetrated amongst them so deeply that they were drowned in the pit of ignorance. The Holy Qur'an falsified idols squarely leaving no basis on which the idolaters could stand on idolatry whether it is religious justification or logical and psychological considerations. The Holy Qur'an negated idolatry on all bases, in summation, the Holy Qur'an also elucidated all misconceptions of Arabs regarding God.

Falsification of idols was the grounding stone in the reformation of Arabia. Just like the modern psychologists and psychotherapists, the Holy Qur'an deals with the worst attribute of the nation first which was the foundation of all iniquities and immoralities amongst them. This psychological attempt of the Holy Qur'an served as the first leading step towards the success. It not only diverted the thinking and ideology of Arabs but they were also prepared to ponder over the absurdity of idols. Consequently, they inclined towards the truth and attracted towards Islam.

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وَتَاللَّهِ لَا كَيْدَنَ أَصْنَمَكُمْ بَعْدَ أَنْ تَوَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾ فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذْدًا إِلَّا كَبِيرًا لَهُمْ  
 لَعَلَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ قَالُوا مَنْ فَعَلَ هَذَا بِالْهَيْتِنَا إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ قَالُوا  
 سَمِعْنَا فِتًى يَذُكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ ﴿٣٧﴾ قَالُوا فَأْتُوا بِهِ عَلَى أَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ  
 يَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ قَالُوا أَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هَذَا بِالْهَيْتِنَا يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ ﴿٣٩﴾ قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ  
 هَذَا فَسَأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾ فَرَجَعُوا إِلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ  
 الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ ثُمَّ نَكَسُوا عَلَى رُءُوسِهِمْ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا هَؤُلَاءِ يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ قَالَ  
 أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ ﴿٤٣﴾ أَفَى لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ  
 مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾<sup>lxxi</sup>

Translation: “And, by oath of Allah, I shall seek to harm your idols after you have gone away and turned your backs.’ He shattered them all, except the biggest among them, that perhaps they may question it. They said, ‘Who has done this to our Gods? He is indeed cruel!’ Some among them said, ‘We heard a youth speak ill of them – the one called Ibrahim.’ They said, ‘Therefore bring him in front of the people, perhaps they may testify.’ They said, ‘Did you do this to our Gods, O Ibrahim?’ Said he, ‘Rather, their chief may have done it; so question them, if they can speak.’ So they turned towards their own selves and (inwardly) said, ‘Indeed you yourselves are unjust.’ Again they were inverted upon their heads; saying, ‘You know well that these do not speak.’ He said, ‘What! You worship, instead of Allah, one that neither benefits you nor harms you?’ ‘Disgrace be upon you and all the idols whom you worship instead of Allah; so do you not have sense?’<sup>lxxii</sup>



قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ شُرَكَاءَ كُمْ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ  
 أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ ۚ أَمْ آتَيْنَهُمْ كِتَابًا فَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَاتٍ مِنْهُ ۚ بَلْ إِنَّ يَعِدُ  
 الظَّالِمُونَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿١٧٨﴾

Translation: “Proclaim, ‘Just show me your partners (false deities) whom you worship other than Allah; show me which part of the earth have they created – or do they have any share in the heavens?’ Or have We given them some Book, so they are on its clear proofs? In fact the unjust do not give promises to each other, except of deceit.”<sup>lxix</sup>

Describing this Qur’anic refute of idolatry, Sayyid Qutb says,

*“The argument is strong and the evidence is clear. This is the earth, stretched before us in all directions. Which part of it, and which creature on it, can anyone claim to have been created by other than God? Should anyone dare to make such a claim, everything on earth will rebut it loud and clear. Indeed, everything tells the same thing: all have been created by God Almighty. Everything bears the mark of the inimitable work of the Maker. In addition, no one claims that such alleged deities have any part in the creation or ownership of the heavens. Not a single one makes such a claim, not even for the jinn or the angels. At no time did they claim that their alleged deities had a portion of the heavens.”<sup>lxx</sup>*

Moreover, the Holy Qur’an narrates the incident of Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام when he logically refuted the idol worship and with his practical manifestation he proved the futility of idols. It is stated in the Holy Qur’an:

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they themselves are creatures. Giving an example of a weak creature, the Holy Qur'an asserts that the idolaters worship idols and submit to them without justification:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاستَمِعُوا لَهُ ۗ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا  
ذَبَابًا وَلَا يَاجْتَمِعُوا لَهُ ۗ وَإِنْ يُسَلِّبَهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ۗ ضَعُفَ  
الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ ﴿٤٦﴾<sup>lxv</sup>

Translation: "O people, an example is being illustrated therefore listen to it attentively; Those whom you worship besides Allah can never create a fly even if they all come together for it; and if a fly took away something from them, they cannot retrieve that from it; how weak are the seeker and the sought!"<sup>lxvi</sup>

The above verse makes a universal declaration that all deities people associate with Allah are weak and powerless. Sayyid Qutb, commenting on this, states,

*"All false deities, whether they be idols and statues, are incapable of creating a fly, even if they muster all their forces, utilize all their knowledge and channel all their resources into one supreme effort. Indeed, the creation of a mere fly, that small and abject creature, defies all the harnessed powers of such false gods."*<sup>lxvii</sup>

In addition, the above phrase adds another dimension in describing the powerlessness of idols that the false deities cannot recollect even a tiny thing from a fly when it takes away from them.

In the course of logical falsification of idols, the Holy Qur'an directly addresses the idolaters and explains the utter absurdity of idolatry and their folly in worshipping them:

iii) Logical arguments in falsification of idols

In order to alert the minds of Arabs, the Holy Qur'an, in a psychological manner, presents some logical and undeniable arguments and apparent examples to falsify idolatry. A few of them are presented here:

لَهُ دَعْوَةُ الْحَقِّ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُونَ لَهُمْ بِشَيْءٍ إِلَّا كَبَاسِطٍ  
كَفِيهِ إِلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُغَ فَاهُ وَمَا هُوَ بِبَالِغِهِ ۗ وَمَا دَعَاءُ الْكٰفِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلٰلٍ ۗ <sup>lxii</sup>

Translation: “Only the prayer to Him is truthful; and whomever they pray to besides Him, do not hear them at all, but like one who has his hands outstretched towards water that it may come into his mouth, and it will never come; and every prayer of the disbelievers remains wandering.” <sup>lxiii</sup>

The verse explains that only one prayer is a true prayer, and it is answered. It is the appeal which is directed to God, expressing trust in Him and rely upon Him, seeking His help, mercy and guidance. All other prayers are false and vain. In addition, the verse portrays a very much alive and vivid scene, showing the reality of those who direct their appeals to false gods whom they claim to be God's partners. It is like the one, who, very thirsty, seeking water and extending his hands towards it, with an open mouth which sends an earnest supplication, asking for the water to reach his mouth, but it never does in spite of his efforts. The same applies to the prayer of those who disbelieve in God's oneness, and pray to alleged partners. <sup>lxiv</sup>

Creation is an attribute which earns the creator the right to be worshipped. Without such ability to create, there is no justification for worshipping any alleged partner of God. This is the lowest depth to which human intellect can sink to worship those who have created nothing, and cannot create anything, because

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cause harm and bring benefit. It is He Who hears the supplication of His servants and accepts their worship. Surah Al-Furqaan reveals the utter helplessness and absurdity of these idols:

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً لَا يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ وَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ  
ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا وَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ مَوْتًا وَلَا حَيَاةً وَلَا نُشُورًا<sup>lix</sup>

Translation: “And people have appointed other Gods besides Him, those who do not create anything but are themselves created, and those who do not have the power to harm or benefit themselves, and who do not have any authority over death or life nor over resurrection.”<sup>lix</sup>

In explanation of the above verse, Sayyid Qutb says,

*“Their false deities are deprived of the most essential characteristics of the Godhead. Thus, they “cannot create anything,” while God has created everything, and false deities “are themselves created.” Their servants create them in the sense that they make them, if they are statues or idols, while if they are angels, devils, humans or some other object of God’s making, then God creates them, in the sense of bringing them into existence. Furthermore, they “have it not in their power to avert harm from, or bring benefit to, themselves,” let alone doing so to others. Someone who might not be able to bring himself benefit may still be able to cause harm, but even this is out of the hands of such false deities. Hence, this is mentioned first as the easiest thing to do, then it is followed by other qualities that only God can have: they “have no power over death, life or resurrection.” If these deities cannot cause a living thing to die, or bring to life anything dead, or bring someone to life after death, what characteristic of the Godhead could they have? How could these idolaters ascribe divinity to such beings?”<sup>lxi</sup>*

يَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُ وَمَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُ ۗ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ ﴿١٣﴾ يَدْعُوا  
لِمَنْ ضَرُّهُ أَقْرَبُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِ ۗ لَيْسَ الْمَوْلَىٰ وَ لَيْسَ الْعَشِيرُ ﴿١٤﴾<sup>lv</sup>

Translation: “They worship such, beside Allah, which neither harms them nor benefits them; this only is the extreme error. They worship one from whom harm is expected more than the benefit; indeed what an evil master and indeed what an evil friend!”<sup>lvi</sup>

These verses categorically explain the powerlessness of these gods and the folly of believing in such deities. It is pointed out that these gods are taken in by these idols-worshippers so how come their own designing became an object of their adoration. How can they help when they are not in the position to protect themselves if anyone tries to break them or if a dog tries to haul them away. They neither have the strength and ability to walk about, nor the power to laugh and understand. Then on what grounds can they be taken as an object of worship?<sup>lvii</sup> How can they be raised to the position of God? How can they give support when they cannot even help themselves? How are they to be treated as partners with God?

The Holy Qur'an alerts the Arabs' minds to their folly as they ascribed divinity to such deities. Those idols did not have feet with which to walk, hands with which to grasp, eyes with which to see, or ears with which to hear. Yet they themselves had these senses. How could they then worship statues made of stone that could not even do the things they themselves could do? Sometimes they considered these idols as symbols of the angels or of their own forefathers. Yet these were creatures like themselves who could not create anything or give support to anyone, because they themselves are created and cannot help themselves.<sup>lviii</sup> Furthermore, it is said that these idols are unable to benefit rather they will cause complete ruin in the hereafter. In point of fact it is only Almighty Allah Who can

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children cannot be the possessions of the father. Therefore, if the angels had been the daughters of Allah Almighty then they themselves should have been God and not the servants of God Almighty!

### ii) **The Holy Qur'an falsifies idols and its associated beliefs**

The Holy Qur'an refers to the fact repeatedly that idols are creatures and, intrinsically, they are far removed in nature from Divinity. They can neither create anything nor support their worshippers. Indeed, they themselves are created. They are powerless, unable to help themselves. They can neither benefit nor harm. They cannot answer prayers or supplication since they cannot hear or know. Hence, it is completely illogical for them to be worshipped when they can neither harm nor benefit anyone. The Holy Qur'an denounces worship to anyone or anything other than God and it is made categorical that every activity of this kind is utterly ridiculous.

أَيُّشْرِكُونَ مَا لَا يَخْلُقُ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ ﴿١٧١﴾ وَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ لَهُمْ نَصْرًا وَلَا  
أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَنْصُرُونَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ وَإِنْ تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى لَا يَتَّبِعُوكُمْ ۖ سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْكُمْ  
أَدْعَوْتُمُوهُمْ أَمْ أَنْتُمْ صَامِتُونَ ﴿١٧٣﴾<sup>iii</sup>

**Translation:** "Do they (the disbelievers) ascribe (false deities) that which do not create anything, but are themselves created? And cannot provide any help to them, nor do they help themselves? And if you call the disbelievers to guidance, they do not follow you; it is the same for you, whether you invite them or remain silent."<sup>iv</sup>

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فَاسْتَفْتِهِمُ الرِّبَّكَ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَهُمُ الْبَنُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ أَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِنَاثًا وَهُمْ  
 شَاهِدُونَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ مِّنْ أَفْكَهَمَ لَيَقُولُونَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ وَلَدَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٤١﴾  
 أَصْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِينَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ ط xlix

Translation: “Therefore ask them, whether the daughters are for your Lord and the sons for them! Or that have We created the angels as females, while they were present? Pay heed! It is their slander that they say. – That ‘Allah has offspring’; and indeed, surely, they are liars. Has he chosen daughters instead of sons?”<sup>1</sup>

In order to deviate the pagan Arabs from their misconception about angels, the Holy Qur’an portrays the situation of the Judgement Day, where Almighty Allah confronts idolaters with the angels whom they would worship and expected them for the intercession with Allah. Angels will praise Allah and will deny any association from their false worship.

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يَقُولُ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ أَهَؤُلَاءِ إِيَّاكُمْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١٤٣﴾  
 قَالُوا سُبْحٰنَكَ أَنْتَ وَلِيْنَا مِنْ دُونِهِمْ ۗ بَلْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ الْجِنَّ ۗ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِهِمْ  
 مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ li

Translation: “And on the day when He will raise them all, and then say to the angels, ‘Did they worship you’? They will say, ‘Purity is to you – only you are our Supporter, not they; in fact they worshipped the jinns; most of them believed only in them.’”<sup>lii</sup>

The irrefutable arguments mentioned in the Holy Qur’an make it categorical that angels are the servants (creation) of Almighty Allah. It is nonsense to consider them as daughters of Allah as children are from the genus of the father. Likewise,

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daughters, i.e. the angels, even they themselves hated that daughters should be born to them.<sup>xliii</sup> The Holy Qur'an reveals:

<sup>xliv</sup> إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ لَيَسْمُونُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَسْمِيَةَ الْأُنثَى ﴿٤٤﴾

Translation: "Indeed those who do not believe in the Hereafter, coin the names of angels like those of females."<sup>xlv</sup>

Allah, the One and Absolute, Who is free from any association or partners, refuted this belief of pagans with fairly cerebral arguments. Sayyid Qutb comments,

*"They used to prefer boys to girls, considering the birth of a girl something of a tragedy. Yet they alleged at the same time that the angels were female and that they were God's daughters. If females are of a lesser rank, how could they assign daughters to their Lord and keep sons for themselves? Or was it that He chose for Himself daughters and gave them sons? Neither possibility stands to reason. The Prophet ﷺ is instructed to question them about this worthless claim. He is also to ask them about the source of the superstition and how it came about. In other words, where did they get the idea that the angels were females? Did they witness their creation in order to know their sex?"<sup>xlvi</sup>*

<sup>xlvii</sup> أَمْ اتَّخَذَ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ بَنَاتٌ وَأَصْفَكُمْ بِالْبَنِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

Translation: "Has He chosen daughters for Himself from His creation, and selected only sons for you?"<sup>xlviii</sup>



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لَوْ أَرَادَ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا لَأَصْطَفَىٰ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۗ سُبْحٰنَهُ ۗ هُوَ اللَّهُ  
الْوٰحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿٣٣٩﴾

Translation: “Were Allah to create a son for Himself, He would have chosen any one from His creation! Purity is to Him! He is Allah, the One, the All Dominant.”<sup>xl</sup>

Furthermore, a logical argument is stated in Surah Al-An’aam that without a female partner no son is born. So when Allah is the One alone how can He have any son or daughter?

بَدِيعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ۗ اَنۢىۤ يَكُوۡنُ لَهٗ وَّلَدٌ وَّلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهٗ صٰحِبَةً ۗ وَ خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۗ وَ هُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿٣١﴾

Translation: “The Originator of the heavens and the earth; how can He possibly have a child when, in fact, He does not have a spouse? And He has created all things; and He knows everything.”<sup>xlii</sup>

Idolaters were well aware of the fact that offspring is required for prolongation of one’s. In addition, the one who is subdued or conquered chooses a son, or is overcome by sexual desire, or one who is afraid of death or an enemy. Almighty Allah, using the recognized fact, addressed the minds of idolaters in the Holy Qur’an that since Allah Almighty is free of all these weaknesses, how then will He have children?

### **c) They considered angels as daughters of Allah and worshipped them**

Believing in the angels is an essential component of Islamic faith. Angels are Allah’s creation who abide by Almighty Allah and never disobey Him. Nevertheless, the Arabs of the days of ignorance, used to claim that God had

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*for judgement. Had they been related to Him, they would be due different treatment.*” xxxvi

With these clear proofs, Almighty Allah declared so plainly that these jinn, angels, humans and the whole universe is created by Allah alone and creation cannot be equal to the Creator in any aspect. Hence, it is inconceivable that any creation be equal to the Creator. Therefore, it is sheer lunacy to believe jinn as lord or partners of Allah.

### **b) They believed that Allah had offspring**

Idolaters used to say that God had sons and daughters. Jews claimed that Prophet Uzair عليه لسلام was the son of God. Similarly, Christians proclaimed the same for Prophet Isa عليه لسلام. Polytheists of Arabia believed that the angels were the daughters of God. At various places in the Holy Qur’an, Allah refutes this belief of the idolaters with logical arguments. Such as in Surah Al-Mominun, Allah says:

مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِذَا لَدَّهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ  
بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ <sup>ط</sup> سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ <sup>xxxvii</sup>

Translation: “Allah has not chosen any child, nor any other God along with Him – were it so, each God would have taken away its creation, and each one would certainly wish superiority over the other; Purity is to Allah above all the matters they fabric/ate.” xxxviii

Similarly, in Surah Az-Zumar Allah states that if for argument Allah Almighty had any desire for children, He could have chosen that according to His own wish not according to the plan of idolaters:

those beings, whether they considered them evil spirits or evil creatures. Therefore, they used to provide offerings to them in order to circumvent their fury. Thereafter, they began to worship them. This form of paganism that prevailed in Arabia before Islam is just one of many forms in which such misconceptions flourished and led to the worship of the jinn describing them as God's partners. The surah uses a very simple sentence, conveyed in the Arabic text by just one word, to describe the stupidity of such beliefs: "Although He created them". (Verse 100) The sarcasm here is very clear. If it is God, the Glorious who has created them, how is it, then, that they are His partners, sharing with Him the qualities of Godhead and Lordship of the universe?"<sup>xxxiii</sup>

The Holy Qur'an also refutes the superstition of the pagans for any kind of relationship between jinn and Almighty Allah. Almighty Allah places Himself far above this worthless fabrication:

وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجِنَّةِ نَسَبًا ۗ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾  
 سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Translation: "And they have appointed a relationship between Him and the jinns; and indeed the jinns surely know that they will be brought forth. Purity is to Allah from the matters they fabricate."<sup>xxxv</sup>

Commenting on the above verse, Sayyid Qutb writes,

*"The allegation being that the angels were God's daughters born to Him by the jinn! The unbelievers claimed that this is how the relation started. The jinn, however, know for certain that they are created by God, like all other creation, and they also know that they will be brought before Him*

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Hence, in order to eradicate idolatry (Shirk), it was a primary requirement to clear their misconceptions about Allah and falsify idols with all their associated feelings. Thus, we see that all the verses regarding condemnation of idolatry are divided into three major sections:

- i) The Holy Qur'an refutes all misconceptions of Arabs regarding God.
- ii) The Holy Qur'an falsifies idols and all its associated beliefs.
- iii) Logical arguments in falsification of idols.

### **i) The Holy Qur'an refutes all misconceptions of Arabs regarding God**

Following are the misconceptions of idolaters about God and their refutation by the Holy Qur'an:

#### **a) They associated jinn with Almighty Allah and worshipped them**

Jinns were also worshipped by some Arabs in Arabia. Therefore, they associated *jinn* as partners of Allah. Allah states in the Holy Qur'an:

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ الْجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمْ وَخَرَقُوا لَهُ بَنِينَ وَبَنَاتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ سُبْحٰنَهُ  
وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿۳۱﴾<sup>xxxix</sup>

Translation: “And out of sheer ignorance they have ascribed jinns as partners of Allah, whereas it is He Who created them, and they have invented sons and daughters for Him! Purity and Supremacy is to Him, from all what they ascribe.”<sup>xxxix</sup>

Sayyid Qutb, giving brief history of worship of jinn, logically explains the above verse,

*“Different forms of pagan communities amongst Arabs were aware that there were evil beings, i.e. something similar to devils, and they feared*

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about, 'Leave him and cling steadfastly to your gods! Indeed he has a hidden objective in this! We never heard of this even in Christianity, the latest religion; this is clearly a newly fabricated matter. 'Is the Qur'an which is sent to him, among us'? In fact they are in a doubt concerning My Book; in fact, they have not yet tasted My punishment.'<sup>xxx</sup>

Therefore, the declaration that Allah is the Only God and that all other supposed deities had no true power totally confounded the perverse mentality of the idolaters.

Idolatry was the principal and the main barrier in the reformation of Arabs. So, the Holy Qur'an, in its initial attempts of reformation falsified idols and endeavored to turn them away from idolatry. It all happened with respect to psychology and behaviors of Arabs. The Holy Qur'an addressed and nullified all their false notions and practices with a logical description of the absurdity of idolatry. Below is the discussion that how the Holy Qur'an comprehensively refuted idolatry and falsified idols:

The Arabs were involved in idolatry (*Shirk*) in two major ways:

- a. They invented so many misconceptions regarding Almighty Allah and His attributes. Besides ascribing deities parallel to Allah, they believed in the spouse and children of Almighty Allah (Surely Allah is beyond that).
- b. Though they did not consider idols as 'God', yet they believed in their lordship and independent power. They also believed in the independent influence of these deities in the affairs of their life and the universe. Therefore, they used to ask help from them for their needs and adversities.



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Manah (form *maniyah*, allotted fate) was the goddess of destiny and as such represented an earlier phase of religious life. Her main sanctuary consisted of a black stone in Qudayd on the road between Makkah and Yathrib (later al-Madinah) and she was especially popular with the Aws and the Khazraj.<sup>xxv</sup>

These three idols are categorically mentioned in the Holy Qur'an as,

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّىٰ ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَمَنْوَةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْآخَرَیٰ ﴿١٢٧﴾ أَلَكُمُ الذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ  
الْأُنثَىٰ ﴿١٢٨﴾ تِلْكَ إِذَا قِسْمَةٌ ضِیْرَىٰ ﴿١٢٩﴾ إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّیْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَ  
آبَاؤُكُمْ مَّا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ط إِنْ یَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ  
وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمُ الْهُدَىٰ ﴿١٣٠﴾<sup>xxvi</sup>

Translation: “So did you observe the idols Lat and Uzza? And subsequently the third, the Manat? What! For you the son, and for Him the daughter? Then that is surely a very unjust distribution! They are nothing but some names that you have coined, you and your forefathers – Allah has not sent any proof for them; they follow only guesses and their own desires; whereas the guidance from their Lord has come to them.”<sup>xxvii</sup>

Nevertheless, Hubal (from Aram for vapor, spirit), evidently the chief deity of al-Ka'ba, was represented in human form. Beside him stood ritual arrows used for divination by the soothsayer who drew lots by means of them. At the conquest of Makkah Hubal shared the lot of the other idols and was demolished.<sup>xxviii</sup>

It is a well known fact that the practice of idol-worship overcame the behavior, psych, attitude, morals and overall lifestyle of Arabs. It made them bigoted, deprived them from reasoning and kept them in the nether region of ignorance.

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pagodas dedicated to the heavenly bodies which they deified. They firmly believed in the propitious as well as the malignant influence of the stars upon the destinies of human beings and other objects. Some persons worshipped fire also.<sup>xvii</sup>

Arabs were not only involved in idol worshipping but they also contaminated the sacred worships such as Pilgrimage, *Umra* and sacrifice with their polytheistic rituals and absurdities. Beside the central Ka'ba at Makkah, other sanctuaries had also been erected where they used to circumambulate, offer gifts and slaughter animals.<sup>xviii</sup> They used to offer prayers around the Holy Ka'ba clapping and shouting.<sup>xix</sup> People of Quraish used to mention the names of their idols while saying *Talbiya* in the state of *Ihram*.<sup>xx</sup> Similarly, they also polluted the sacred worship Hajj with their idolatrous practices. Two tribes Aws and Khazraj used to shave off their heads not in Mina but at their idol Manah.<sup>xxi</sup> Moreover, pagans both male and female used to circumambulate the Holy Ka'ba nakedly.<sup>xxii</sup>

### **The Principal Idols of Arabs**

Al-'Uzza, al-Lat and Manah (they considered them as the three daughters of Allah), had their respective sanctuaries. Al-Lat (from al-Ilahah, the goddess) had her sacred tracts (*Hima* and *Haram*) near al-Ta'if, where the Makkans and others flocked for pilgrimage and sacrifice. Within such an enclosure no trees could be felled, no game hunted and no human blood shed. Animal and plant life therein partook in the inviolability of the deity there.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Al-'Uzza (the most mighty, Venus, the morning star) had her cult in Nakhlah east of Makkah. According to al-Kalbi, hers was the most venerated idol among the Quraysh. Human sacrifice characterized her cult. 'Abd-al-'Uzza was a favorite proper name at the rise of Islam.<sup>xxiv</sup>



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In explanation of the above verse, Mufti Ahmad Yaar Khan Badayuni says,

*“The infidels in this nonsensical talk committed infidelity of three types; They acknowledged children for Allah Almighty, For themselves they accepted sons, but daughters of Allah Almighty and accepting angels as females in which there is an insult to angels.”<sup>xiv</sup>*

Describing the idolatrous practices of Pre-Arabs, Dr. Abdul Khaliq in his book Qur’an Studies writes,

*“More or less every tribe had its own god or goddess and there were not less than three hundred and sixty images of them placed in and about the Ka’bah. Hubal and Shams were placed on the roof of the sanctuary. Those who could not come to the Ka’ba for worship had their idols installed in their respective towns and even in their own homes. They circumambulated them in prayer. They would also prostrate before them and kiss them with reverence. The extremists among them would even sacrifice their offspring to please their gods. Especially they would offer the first born of their cattle to them. Further, from the produce of their fields and profits gained from the cattle, a portion was set apart for God and another portion for offering to their idols.”<sup>xv</sup>*

Even after the conception of a deity was formed, natural objects such as trees, wells, caves, stones, remained sacred objects, since they formed the media through which the worshipper could come into direct contact with the deity. The well in the desert with its cleansing, healing, life-giving water very early became an object of worship. The caves became holy through association with underground deities and powers.<sup>xvi</sup>

There was a class of people among the Arabs, the Sabaeans, who, instead of the idols, worshipped the stars and planets. They had created a large number of

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Idols in Arabs were of various kinds. Some were made like men and some like women. The Holy Qur'an says,

انْ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ اِلَّا اِنثَاءً ۚ وَاِنْ يَدْعُونَ اِلَّا شَيْطٰنًا مَّرِيْدًا ۝۷۷

Translation: "The polytheists do not worship Allah, except some females; and they do not worship anyone except the rebellious Satan." <sup>vii</sup>

While still some other idols were fashioned after the image of animals like lions, horses, vultures and so on. The Arabs regarded the goddesses like angels as daughters of God. As indicated in the Holy Qur'an,

وَيَجْعَلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ الْبَنٰتِ سُبْحٰنَهُ ۗ وَلَهُمْ مَّا يَشْتَهُوْنَ ۝۷۸

Translation: "And they assign daughters to Allah – Purity is to Him! – And assign for themselves what they wish." <sup>x</sup>

Mufti Ahmed Yaar Khan Badayuni, in the description of this verse explains that the tribes of Khaza'ah and Kananah would say that the angels are the daughters of Allah Almighty. The verse also highlighted that the pagans were so coarse and ill-mannered that they desired sons for themselves, and sought to prove angels as daughters of Allah Almighty. <sup>xi</sup>

وَجَعَلُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عِبْدُ الرَّحْمٰنِ اِنثَاءً ۚ اَشْهَدُوْا خَلْقَهُمْ ۗ سَتُكْتَبُ  
شَٰهٰدَتُهُمْ وَيُسْـَٔلُوْنَ ۝۷۹

Translation: "And they appoint the angels, who are the bondmen of the Most Gracious, as females; were they present at the time of the angels' creation? Their declaration will be now recorded and they will be questioned." <sup>xii</sup>

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was founded in Arabia. Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, “**Umar bin Luhayy was the first person who distorted the religion of Ishmael عليه السلام and founded idol worship. And I have looked him in the fire of Hell.**”<sup>v</sup>

It is also stated that in the later generation of Hazrat Ishmael عليه السلام people were dispersed in different regions and cities in search of sustenance. As they were very much attached with Makkah and Haram, they brought with them a stone of haram as a mark of remembrance. They used to circumambulate around it (like the Holy Ka’ba) which later on transformed into idol worship and a time came when they started to worship whatever stone they liked.<sup>vi</sup>

There were other factors which nurtured idol worshiping amongst Arabs such as.

**a) Differences among tribes:**

As each tribe wanted a separate idol, consequently the number of idols increased.

**b) Superiority complex of the tribal chiefs:**

The tribal chiefs wanted to keep the nation in ignorance so that they could rule them well. So, they encouraged the absurd practices of idolatry.

The leaders of Arabs also influenced the religion so much that it accorded with their own wishes and desires, interests and advantages. They imposed their perverse thoughts to the ignorant masses. In that manner, they led not only themselves but also large numbers of other people into idolatry. Moreover, the blinded obeisance of the nation to their preceding notables caused its growth and the number of idols increased to the extent that each family had a god.

### **The Idolatrous Practices of Arabs**

## THE IDOLATRY PRACTICE OF ARABS

Before advent of Islam, most of the Arabs in Arabian Desert were living a traditional life - a life which was surrounded by extensive hot weather, scarcity of water and hardship of travelling. This life was far away from the luxuries and busyness of an urban city and the beauty of nature sceneries. The dryness of the desert, uniformity of lifestyle and intensive heat made the temperament of Arabs very hard and egoistic. They were completely independent minded people enjoying adequate freedom. As they were used to of 'absolute freedom', they never considered themselves bound by any law or system. Their independent nature always fought with complete vigor against anyone who tried to rule over them. Apart from the tribal customs and responsibilities, there was only one thing which kept them restricted and bound; and it was idol worship and its associated rituals.

Christianity and Judaism also prevailed in the Arabia. There were also people who worshipped the stars, fire and even jinn and angels. However, the Arabs were more thoroughly steeped in idol worship and it had acquired ridiculous dimensions with them.<sup>i</sup>

### **The Beginning of Idol-worship in Arabia**

As far as the beginning of idol worship amongst Arabs is concerned, most of the historians agree that Umar bin Luhayy (the chief of Khuza tribe), who was an influential man in Makkah and the custodian of the Holy Ka'ba<sup>ii</sup> went to Syria and he met with a group of Amaliqa who were idol worshipers<sup>iii</sup> when he asked them the reason behind idol worshipping, they said, "*They bless us with rain, they help us.*". He asked an idol from them. They gave him an idol 'Hubal'. He brought that idol in Makkah and fixed it in the Holy Ka'ba. He further instructed people to worship it.<sup>iv</sup> Beside this, he also brought two idols 'Asaaf' and 'Naila' in the Holy Ka'ba and provoked people to worship them. In this way idol worship