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RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE (RAWADARI) IN MODERN ERA: IN THE LIGHT OF THE SERRAH OF HOLY PROPHET (ﷺ)

Dr. Riaz Ahmad

*Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Govt. Graduate College,
Samundri, Faisalabad. Pakistan.*

Abstract: The social values of Islamic Culture play a pivotal role in establishing a peaceful society. Today we have multidimensional society where people belong to different religions live, so we need to promote mutual tolerance for a peaceful society. In this context, Islamic teachings are very clear. Each individual of a society deserves the right to benefit from all general facilities. To promote tolerance and to gain peace, Islam does not apply the condition of being a Muslim on its subjects. Rather allowing all to follow their respective religions, Islam asks the Muslims not to do any sort of disfavour to the non-Muslim. Islam encourages Muslims to have friendly and brotherly relations with others. The current image of Islam that depicts this pure religion as one that promotes intolerance and disruption in a society is contradictory to the teachings of Quran and Sunnah. That is why we need to study the true spirit of Islam and follow the way of the Holy prophet (ﷺ) to bring forth the real representative picture of Islam. Doing this will save this world from the clash of civilization and spreading the bad impression of Islam. This paper explores the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) perspective of this mutual tolerance, and derives an easily accessible rout to achieve this direly needed theology.

Key words: Non-Muslim, tolerance, equality, Holy Prophet (ﷺ), present era,

God has created people to be different and they will always remain different not only in their appearance, but also in their beliefs and it is up to each person whether to become a believer or not. Apart from realizing that all human beings are the same in origin which constitutes their dignity, what helps Muslims to be tolerant of non-Muslims is that, they are taught to realize that differences in religions happen because of the will of God who confers on man freedom to choose his own belief (1). Thus, Islamic tolerance of non-Muslims in matters of religion is that non-Muslims are allowed to perform their beliefs and religious duties, and live according to their customs, even if they are forbidden in Islam.

Islam preaches globalization and nationalism, religious tolerance and comity is the key figure to achieve this goal. Islam calls the whole humanity as a nation (2). There is no difference due to creed, race, colour, cast and tribe (3). All the people belong to Adam and Adam created from soil. (4) The Holy Prophet ((ﷺ)) said: Oh, People of God becomes brother (5). The Prophet ((ﷺ)) also said the best among people is who is most beneficial for others (6). It is clear that we all belong to one God and one father, so there is no difference being a human and the God creature.

Islam emphasis on four basic needs of humanity: first is dignity of human beings. Islam considers “human dignity” fundamental for its ideology, or in other words, its principles for its way of life. Qur’an has shown that all the children of Adam have been granted “dignity”(7) by their Creator without any difference, and this human dignity has to be secured and maintained by His guidance and laws by the Muslim teachers and authorities (8), The Holy prophet((ﷺ)) said: In the day of judgment nothing will be precious than human beings, asked: Oh Prophet of God, not Angles, said yes not Angles(9), second is equality of human beings, Holy prophet said: The Arabs have no superiority over non Arabs and not white over black. (10), third is universal and fundamental rights (11), and freedom of thought, conscience and belief (12).

The Holy Prophet ((ﷺ)) why so stress upon the comity, the answer is very simple because the Prophet ((ﷺ)) sent with the religion for all. Islam is not an ethnic religion, which belongs to a specific race. Islam addresses the whole humanity (13). The Quran elaborate the status of the Holy Prophet as a blessing for all and Prophet for all (14). Islam preaches to be good for others (15). It is the duty of Muslims to call others with wisdom, good advice and avoid tension.(16) In the light of this principle the dealing of the Prophet may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, with other religions was always fair, humble and honorable. This situation can best be described in the verse of the Quran:

“To you is your religion, to me being mine.”(17)

The general policy in Islam is to guarantee full rights to non-Muslim populations and therefore people subscribing to other religions were granted full civic rights by the virtue of the Quran and through the application of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Non-Muslim populations living within Muslim communities were granted peaceful and prosperous life through guaranteeing security for both their lives and properties.

During the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) The Arabian Peninsula belonged to various faiths, like Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, polytheists, and others not affiliated with any religion. In the life of the Prophet (ﷺ), one may have many examples high level of tolerance and lenience shown to people of other faiths.

In order to understand and judge the policy of Prophet Muhammad with other religions one must look into the period in which Islam was in power and had a formal state, with the specific laws laid down by the Prophet in accordance with the tenets of religion.

The best example of this which shown by the Prophet (ﷺ) to other religions can be seen in the pact of Madina. When the Prophet migrated to Medina, He was not only religious leader but also a political leader of a state. Which demanded that clear laws of governance be laid out to ensure harmony and stability in a society? This must ensure the peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Jews, Christians and polytheists. All the inhabitants of Medina, the Muslims as well as those who had entered the pact from the Jews, Christian, and idolaters, were

“One nation to the exclusion of all others.” (18)

All were considered the equal members and citizens of Medina society regardless of religion, race, or ancestry. In the pact of Madina it was said that “the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs.”(19) In this it is stated that, although all were members of a society, each had their separate religion which could not be violated. Each was allowed to practice their beliefs freely without any hindrances, and no acts of provocation would be tolerated. As one can see, this Charter consisted of several clauses covering all important aspects of human rights, including such topics as the protection of minorities living under Islamic rule, freedom of worship and movement, freedom to appoint their own judges and to own and maintain their property, exemption from military service, and the right to protection in war(20). Allah Almighty elaborates their rights in these words:

“...If they do come to you, either judge between them or decline to interfere...” (21)

This treaty played a key role in promoting brotherhood and tolerance among the civilians. One key point of this treaty was granting religious freedom to all.

The lives of the practitioners of other religions in the Muslim society were also given protective status. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا مُعَاهِدًا لَمْ يَرِحْ رَائِحَةَ الْجَنَّةِ وَإِنَّ رِيحَهَا يُوجَدُ مِنْ مَسِيرَةِ أَرْبَعِينَ عَامًا (22)-

Abdullah ibn Amr reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Whoever kills a person protected by a treaty will never smell the fragrance of Paradise. Verily, its fragrance can be found from a distance of forty years of travel.”

The Prophet (ﷺ) strictly warned against any maltreatment of people of other faiths. He (ﷺ) said:

“Beware! Who ever is cruel and hard on a non-Muslim minority, or curtails their rights, or burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will; I (Prophet Muhammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgment.” (23)

The holy Prophet (ﷺ) said:

من قتل معاهدًا في غير كتبه، حرم الله عليه الجنة (24)

(A Muslim who will murder a non Muslim he will be forbidden to inter into paradise)

Abdullah bin Abbas said:

كان رسول الله ﷺ اذا بعث جيوشه قال: اخرجوا بسم الله، تقاتلون في سبيل الله من كفر بالله، لا تغدروا ولا تغلوا ولا تمثلوا ولا تقتلوا الولدان ولا اصحاب الصوامع- (25)

(When the Holy prophet (ﷺ) set out an army, ordered them to start your journey with the name of God, fight with infidels, beware of treachery, fraud, humiliation of dead and be careful in the killing of children and women.)

” ان رجلا من المسلمين قتل رجلا من اهل الكتاب ، فرفع الى النبي ﷺ ، فقال رسول الله ﷺ : انا احق من وفي بدمته، ثم امر به قتل - (26)

“When a Muslim killed a person from Ihl e Kitab (Jews or Christian), they sent the case before the Holy Prophet, He (ﷺ) said: I am more responsible to protect their rights and then ordered his murder.

” اذا قتل المسلم النصراني قتل به - (27)

(If a Muslim killed a Christian , he would be killed in revenge)

” دية اليهودى و النصرانى و كل ذمى مثل دية المسلم - (28)

(The reward of bloodshed of a Christian and a Jews is equal to that of Muslim)

Not only these but also many others saying of Holy Prophet (ﷺ) shows that the Prophet (ﷺ) gave full protection of lives, honour, business etc to followers of other religions and allowed each religion to judge in their own matters according to their own scriptures, as long as it did not stand in opposition to articles of the constitution, a pact which took into account the greater benefit of the peaceful co-existence of the society. There are many other examples during the lifetime of the Prophet.

The Prophet (ﷺ) throughout his life had a tenacity of the purpose of establishing peace among nations through signing different pacts, and treaties to ensure peaceful coexistence and security to all people. This is proven through pacts like the Peace of Hdayibiyah and the Treaty of Taif (29). On another occasion, the Prophet (ﷺ) received a delegation of sixty Christians from the region of Najran, then a part of Yemen, at his mosque. When the time for their prayer came, they faced the direction of east and prayed. The Prophet ordered that they be left in their state and not harmed. (30)

Another famous example is the treaty of Najran which was delivered to Christians of Najran and its surrounding area. The document reads, " To the Christians of Najran and its surrounding territories, the security of God and the pledge of His Prophet is extended for their lives, religion and their property- to the present as well as the absent, and others besides, there shall be no interference within the practice of their faith or their observance nor any change in their rights and privileges, no bishop shall be removed from his bishopric, nor any priest from his priesthood, nor any monk from his monastery, and they shall continue to enjoy everything great and small as heretofore no image or cross shall be destroyed, they shall not oppress or be oppressed; they shall not practice the rights of blood-vengeance as in the Days of Ignorance, nor shall they be required to furnish provisions for the troops".(31)

The Prophet emphasized in many letters to his emissaries that religious institutions should not be harmed. Here in a letter addressed to his emissary to the religious leaders of Saint Catherine in Mount Sinai who has sought the protection of the Muslims:

"This is a message from Muhammad ibn Abdullah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, near and far, we are with them. Verily I, the servants, the helpers, and my followers defend them, because Christians are my citizens; and by God! I hold out against anything that displeases them. No compulsion is to be on them. Neither are their judges to be removed from their jobs nor their monks from their monasteries. No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to the Muslims' houses. Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God's covenant and disobey

His Prophet. Verily, they are my allies and have my secure charter against all that they hate. No one is to force them to travel or to oblige them to fight. The Muslims are to fight for them. If a female Christian is married to a Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray. Their churches are declared to be protected. They are neither to be prevented from repairing them nor the sacredness of their covenants. No one of the nation (Muslims) is to disobey the covenant till the Last Day (32).

The whole life of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) is full of such examples of tolerance lenience, brotherhood, justice, freedom. Some saying of the Holy prophet in this regards are:

☆ Sumama bin Ashal rudely behave to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) when he a prisoner but he was released without any compensation. (33)

☆ After exclusion from Madina, the Jews never lived in peace they always created

Problems for the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and the Muslims, but when Khyber was conquered, the Jews requested to lend them the land of Khyber they Holy Prophet accepted their request. (34)

☆ In the battle of Khyber when some Muslims captured some animals of Jews the Holy Prophet became angry. (35)

☆ The tribe of Qanqah misbehaves with a Muslim woman and killed a Muslim, the Holy Prophet cordon them off and latter on, on their request set them free. (36)

☆ The tribe of Banu Nuzair tried to Kill Holy prophet. The prophet seized them with his companions, when they requested to let them go, the Holy Prophet accepted their request and they left Madina. (37)

These are only some examples of the Prophet's (ﷺ) tolerance to people of other faiths. Islam recognizes that there are a plurality of religions on this earth, and gives the right to individuals to choose the path which they believe to be true. Religion is not to be, and was never, forced upon an individual against their own will, and these examples from the life of the Prophet are an epitome of the verse of the Quran which promotes religious tolerance and sets the guideline for the Muslims' interaction with people of other faiths. God says:

"...There is no compulsion in religion..." (38) The Holy Qur'an clearly stresses the importance of religious freedom. There is no compulsion in the matters of religion. Faith is an individual concern and commitment, between you and the One God.

It must therefore be something which you desire, not what is forced upon you. If you force a faith upon someone, then it becomes hollow and without

true conviction. Islam stresses on a person finding the truth through their own path. If a faith is true, then it will appeal to the heart.

“And if your Lord had enforced His will, surely, all who are on the earth would have believed together. Will you, then, force men to become believers?”(39).

This verse shows that religious freedom is part of Allah’s design. Allah hasn’t forced anyone, so who are we to do so? By forcing your faith upon someone, is really having no faith at all. This is not the idea behind Allah creating this physical world. As the verse states, it could have been easy for Allah to force His Will, but Allah gave us free will instead; gave us choices. We must choose the right path or be answerable for the consequences. Through all the Holy Books, Allah has explained to us the result of this choice. Either you submit to the One God and attain Paradise or you reject Him and attain Hell. But that has to be our choice. Likewise, the path we take must be our choice.

In fact there is an entire chapter of the Qur’an, Sura Al-Kafirun, which clearly explains how with should conduct ourselves with non-believers which explains clearly that you are free to choose which ever path you desire, so you should neither force a Muslim to worship what you worship; likewise a Muslim should not force his beliefs upon you. “For you your religion, for me my religion.” A clear statement of religious tolerance in Islam. (40)

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was sent as a mercy to the world to establish the true meaning of brotherhood among humans as they should all stand united regardless of their skin color or theological belief. He succeeded in liberating man from the bondage of man. He gave the dynamic conception of an undivided humanity, the family of Man, the children of Adam. He managed to raise the ambitions of people from the limited confinements of national identity to the liberal wide-open meaning of humanity.

Islam has been misunderstood by some people as a religion which promotes violence and terrorism. This misunderstanding is essentially based not on the established principles in Islam, but on some examples presented by those who

claim to be among Muslims. In regards to the legitimacy of the concepts and guidance, Islam as a faith must be understood from its main sources which are the Qur’an, the word of God, and the Sunnah or the practice of the Prophet Muhammad. Right understanding of Islam is very significant to understand the issue of religious tolerance in Islam.

Conclusion:

The world is passing through a dark phase of moral bankruptcy, social disintegration and parochial loyalties which helped in inciting wars and increasing the weight of the roaring voices calling for enmity and hatred. Prophet Muhammad's message sanctified the life of all human beings

irrespective of their racial origin or religious affiliation. He taught us the true meaning of mercy to all.

Peace is an essential characteristic of Islam. Islam does not like and discourages contravening upon others' rights even in the battlefield. We need to learn great deal from the teaching of the blessed Prophet (saw). The Prophet of Allah forgave his worst enemies, leaving for us an example that in the eyes of Allah, it is better to forgive than to revenge. On the other hand, there are things need to done by the non-Muslim fellows. When Muslim societies protect the rights of non-Muslims as a religious obligation, then it also the duty of non-Muslim societies to protect the of Muslims. Islam in no circumstances allows riots or infringing upon others' rights. Garbing such deeds Islamic is a great injustice. Islam teaches us that one's friendship should not impede one from ruling justice in his favour, or one's animosity should not make you pass verdict against him. The teachings of Quran and Sunnah are the safeguard of human rights. The need of the hour is to understand the true image of Islam, not letting the deeds of a few distort the beneficent image of this peace prevailing religion.

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