

THE HOLY PROPHET (SAW) AS AN EMBODIMENT OF PEACE—AN ANALYSIS OF EXTRACTS FROM THE TEXT OF AL-QURAN AND SUNNAH

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ABSTRACT

In view of the geo-politics of the twenty first century where despite the concerted efforts of the international community to maintain peace on the globe, the still is confronted with the wars and its worst consequences. One of the reasons for such unhappy developments is that religion is most of the time considered as war-mongering. This may be somewhat true in case of certain cases; however, the case of Islam is totally different. The very word Islam stands for peace. It was revealed on Prophet Muhammad (SAW) who remained an icon of peace and mercy for the whole Mankind. This paper was an attempt to highlight some of the guiding injunctions of Islam together with the peace-related overtures of the Last Prophet of Allah. The problem under study was to explore, “The Holy Prophet (SAW) as an embodiment of Peace—an analysis of extracts from the text of The Holy Quran and Sunnah”. The objectives were: 1, to highlight some of the commandments of Islam regarding peace; and 2, to pinpoint some of the peace-promoting instances from the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW). The methodology adopted was to highlight some of the peace-promoting text of the Holy Quran coupled with instances from the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW). It was found that Islam stands as religion for peace. The last messenger of Allah was a complete embodiment of peace in His disposition and practice. Hence the very text of the Holy Quran as ell as the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) provide some very cherished ideals and norms for the establishment of a peaceful global community.

Key Words: Islam, Peace, Religion, Reconciliation, Tolerance, Respect for diversity.

INTRODUCTION:

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was the last Messenger of Allah for the moral purification of Humanity. Of course, peace is the fundamental urge of Humanity, therefore, the life and practices of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is a model for the rest of Mankind in general and for the Muslims in particular. In today’s globalized context where a number of different cultures and civilize-

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ations with their respective creeds and ideologies exist, there is a dire need of peace, tolerance, and respect for diversity. In view of this the researcher embarked upon himself to highlight some of the peace-loving injunctions of Islam and examples from the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

Statement of the problem:

The problem to explore was, “The Holy Prophet (SAW) as an embodiment of Peace— an analysis of extracts from the text of The Holy Quran and Sunnah”.

Objectives of the study:

1, to highlight some of the extracts of the Holy Quran related to peace; 2, to pinpoint some of the examples in the form of practices from the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

Significance of the study:

This study is significant in the sense that peace is the fundamental urge of Human Beings hence; it needs to be established on the blue planet. In this connection the commandments of Islam and the very life practices of the Holy Prophet (SAW) provide a sound foundation. Furthermore, it will help in at least reducing the current wave of Islamophobia prevalent in the international community. The paper is equally significant for peace-researchers, especially those who are more interested in the study of Religions.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

The study was analytical in nature where the text of the Holy Quran was consulted together with the *Ahadith* of the Holy Prophet (SAW) that reflected the practice of the Last Messenger of Allah regarding the establishment of peace on Earth. In most cases the primary sources were relied upon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the related literature is presented in the following pages.

What is Peace?

Derived from Latin word ‘pax’, the English word, ‘peace’ means a pact, an agreement to end the war, dispute or conflict between two warring: people, nations or groups of people (Khemananda, 1996). The Oxford Learner's Dictionary has given the following detail. Peace refers to a situation in which no violence exists in a country or an area. Similarly, it refers to calmness and the presence of friendly relationship with others, as mentioned in Oxford Learner's Dictionary, (7th Ed. 2007).

Etymology of the word Islam:

The word ‘Islam’ is from ‘*Silm*’, an Arabic word where ‘*Silm*’ means peace. The fundamental belief in Islam is *Tauheed* (the Unity of Allah). Allah possesses

some attributes in which one is “As-Salam” (Peace in Quran, n.d). Having an Arabic origin, *As-salam* means peace and security. Hence the very nomenclature of ‘Islam’ is peace. Islam maintains that the chaste and righteous people will be granted to live in Paradise which is usually termed as “Home of Peace” as this verse reveals “God calls to the Home of Peace (10:25). *Jannah* is the ultimate abode, the trait of which is that where people will wish and live with peace. Similarly, in a conflict situation, reconciliation is held in high esteem by declaring, “Reconciliation is best” (4:128).

Quranic injunctions regarding peace:

Quran is the sacred Book in Islam. It is the foundation of all knowledge and guidance. This Book was revealed on Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The life of the Prophet (SAW) is a clear example of practice on the revealed text. Therefore, some of the text of the Holy Quran that exclusively deals with peace and peace-promoting overtures, is presented below. “They were the first to attack you”, (Al-Quran, 9:13). Similarly, “Permission to take up arms is hereby given to those who are attacked because they have been wronged” (Al-Quran, 22:38). This means that in case of arm conflict it must be kept in mind the opponents are surely the attackers. Hence preventive warfare is acceptable as a last resort but no preemptive strikes. Similarly, the commandment, “And good and evil are not alike. Repeal evil with good (Al-Quran, 41:33-34) clearly indicates the importance of peace.

The text of the Holy Quran explicitly maintains that its path is “The path of peace” (5:16). Similarly, with reference to a warring or conflicting situation, Islam emphasizes reconciliation in this verse, “reconciliation as the best policy”, (Al-Quran, 4:128). In this connection another injunction goes thus, “Allah dislikes and abhors any disturbance” of the peace, (Al-Quran 2:205). Similarly, patience and forbearance is encouraged, “O believers, seek assistance in prayer. Allah is with those who are patient, (Al-Quran, 2:153). This verse of the Holy Quran is self-explanatory, “Whenever they kindle the fire of war, Allah puts it out, (Al-Quran,). Aggression is strictly prohibited as is commanded, “And Fight in the way of Allah with those who fight you, but do not be aggressive”, (Al-Quran, 2:192). Furthermore, for avoiding war and destruction and for the betterment of the human family, Islam orders its adherents to always keep on promises or treaties, “So long as they go straight with you, you do go straight with them,” (Al-Quran, 9:7).

Hadith and Sunnah on Peace:

In this portion of the paper some of the text of the Holy Sayings of the Last Prophet of Allah are presented. "God grants to gentleness what He doesn't grant to harshness", *Al-Hadith*, (Waheed-ud-Din, n.d). Islam explicitly declares that the last Prophet of Allah came for Humanity as a mercy. "And we (Allah) have sent only you (O Muhammad) as a mercy for the entire universe" (The Holy Quran, 21:107). Similarly, the Holy Quran ordains, "My mercy embraces everything, (7:156)".

Explaining the attributes of the Creator a Sacred Saying of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) goes thus, "God is peace", narrated in *al-Bukhari*, (Peace in Quran, n.d). The very spirit of Islam is clarified in this text of *Hadith*, which declares, "Peace is Islam, *Al-Bukhari* (Peace in Quran, n.d).

The Holy Prophet (SAW) always resorted to peaceful measures and tried His level best to avoid confrontation even in case of very severe emotional circumstances. He was forced by the inhabitants of Makkah to migrate to Medina but the exemplary stance of the Holy Prophet remained epoch-making at the time of the conquest of Makkah where He announced amnesty for all the inhabitants. He established the rule of non-confrontation for the adherents of Islam in particular. This is evident from the following text of the practice of the Prophet (SAW) which goes thus, "Whenever the Prophet had an option between two courses of action, He always chose the easier one, (the one that is non-confrontational), narrated in *al-Bukhari*, (Waheed-ud-Din, n.d).

Beyond the human entity, even the Holy Prophet (SAW) remained merciful throughout His life to other living things such as animals, plants, and life in general.

The religion Islam that was preached by the Holy Prophet (SAW) possesses a towering position among all world religions with reference to universality of thought, global citizenship, and international understanding. Islam carried such a socializing process that replaced all the old basis of unity among various tribes and clans by the universal idea of Muslim brotherhood. This aspect is so beautifully summarized by Hitti (1970) who admits that out of all the world religions Islam remained successful in relieving the Human family from the confinements of race, color, and nationality. About the very foundation of the Islamic community again Hitti opines that the new community was established in Arabia on the basis of only religion which was

the first ever of its kind in any known human history. Such organization was based on religion, rather than blood, or kinship. as the Arabian society lacked any coherence and unity in the form of a state, the Holy Prophet (SAW) laid the foundation of totally new societal structure. This is expressed by Syed Amir Ali (1967) in the following words, “The stage was set, the moment was psychological for the appearance of greater leader” (p.145).

The Holy Prophet (SAW) established a just order in the city state of Medina where religious toleration became the fundamental for harmony and reconciliation between the conflicting tribes. The Prophet (SAW) clearly emphasized that the Muslims living in this state must believe in all prophets of Allah who were sent for Mankind from time to time. None should utter ill of others’ faiths, so that they should not speak ill against your religion. The Prophet (SAW) aimed at establishing a universal brotherhood so that the people must live in harmony and peace with one another.

Similarly, with reference to religious toleration the Holy Prophet (SAW) preached this very injunction of the Holy Quran that goes thus, “There is no compulsion in religion”. The same was practically demonstrated in the then newly established state of Medina where the 03 tribes of Jews, the local Muslims of Aus and Khzarj tribes, and the migrated Muslims from Makkah lined together. They were granted their respective civic responsibilities for a peaceful co-existence in the city. The mischievous theory that Islam spread by ‘Sword’ is totally wrong and misconceived. Many orientalist scholars such as, W. Montgomery Watt (1956) has clearly discarded this view in the following words, “the accusation that Islam was spread by force of arms and that men were given a choice of ‘Islam or the sword’ is true to a limited extent”, and that, “there was no suggestion of forced conversion here... (p.33)”.

In the following some incredible confessions of the orientalist scholars about the peaceful disposition of the Holy Prophet (SAW) are presented for a precise understanding of the readers. One of the 19th century scholars, Uri Avneri (2006), a Jewish scholar, journalist and a former member of Knesset maintains:

There is no evidence whatsoever of any attempt to impose Islam on the Jews...under Muslim rule the Jews of Spain enjoyed a bloom the like of which the Jews did not enjoy anywhere else until almost our time ... How would this have been possible, had the prophet decreed the ‘spreading of the faith by

the sword' ('Muhammad's Sword' by Uri Avnery, cited in 'Destiny of Mankind—Islam in the 21st century', by Mansur Ali Khan).

Again, the same scholar reveals, 'Spreading the faith by the Sward' is an evil legend, one of the myths that grew up in Europe during the Great wars against the Muslims...' ('Muhammad's Sword' by Uri Avnery, cited Cited in 'Destiny of Mankind—Islam in the 21st century', by Mansur Ali Khan).

Michael H. Hart believes, "...It is this unparalleled combination of secular and religious influence which I feel entitles Muhammad to be considered the most influential single figure in human history" ('The 100 most influential persons in the history' by Hart, M.H., cited in 'Destiny of Mankind—Islam in the 21st century', by Mansur Ali Khan).

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), a famous British scholar admits in the following words, "No emperor with his tiara was obeyed as this man in a clock of his own clouting." ('On Heroes and Hero-worship: the hero as Prophet Muhammad: Islam' by Thomas Carlyle, cited in 'Destiny of Mankind—Islam in the 21st century', by Mansur Ali Khan).

As it is not the main focus of the paper, therefore, the above glimpses suffice the clarification regarding the ill-intended propaganda of some of the Western scholars regarding the spread of Islam as a creed. The Holy Prophet (SAW) was, is, and will remain the unmatched leader for the whole of Mankind who taught humanity the message of morality, respect for humanity, peaceful co-existence, and universal brotherhood.

DISCUSSION:

In view of the extracts of the text of the Holy Quran and *Ahadith* it is evident that Islam has the most practicable system for the promotion of peaceful behaviors among its adherents. The life of the Holy Prophet (SAW) was a practical example regarding peace and peace-promoting practices. During the conquest of Makkah all the opponents, despite their extreme antagonism and brutality, were granted forgiveness. The unsurpassable traits of rectitude, forbearance, and peacefulness of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in face of extremely severe and unbearable hardships, are self-evident, praiseworthy, and an everlasting model for the rest of mankind to follow.

FINDINGS:

As per the objectives of the study it was found that the very nomenclature of Islam stands for peace. Similarly, peace is a specific trait or attribute of the Creator. Hence the very spirit of the religion of Islam is peace. It was found that there is a considerable number of commandments regarding peace and peace-promotion overtures in the text of the Holy Quran. Similarly, the text of

the *Ahadith* and the *Sunna* reveal that the Last Messenger of Allah was sent as a Mercy for the whole of Mankind. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was a perfect embodiment of peace who taught humanity the values of peace, respect for diversity, and global citizenship under the cherished ideals laid down by Islam. Despite the ill-intended propaganda of some Europeans, some of the same scholars have clearly admitted the peaceful disposition of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

CONCLUSION:

On the basis of the findings of the study it can safely be concluded that the Holy Prophet (SAW) was a perfect embodiment of peace who during the course of time faced unbearable hardships yet He exhibited unprecedented patience, forbearance, and respect for humanity and life. He propagated Islam as a religion, the very name of the religion means peace, acceptance, obedience, and shelter.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

This study leads the researcher to recommend that in face of the modern allegations leveled against Islam as being intolerant, primitive, and hardliner religion is absolutely baseless and far from reality. It is recommended that the life of the Prophet (SAW) may be studied from a peace perspective. This will eradicate all the misconceptions created by biased and partial way of thinking. Furthermore, it is recommended especially for the Muslims to seek guidance and assistance from the sacred sources of Quran and Sunnah regarding the current state of affairs.

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