

The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ): A Universal Messenger of Peace

(An Overview of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW)'s Relations with the Non-Muslims)

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ABSTRACT

Islām, as the religion of peace and mercy, teaches and preaches peace, justice, tolerance, goodwill and equality among the human beings. Being the trustee of Allāh, man has been prescribed some requirements for the regulation of human conduct.

The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is the personification of these teachings and commandments of Allāh. His conduct is “the Perfect Example” and “the Role Model” to be followed by human beings. He has been titled in The Qur’ān as (al-Raḥmah) the mercy for all the worlds. Whatever aspect of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)’s life is investigated, it is proved to be unbiased and stands as a hallmark for the universal peace, justice, tolerance and equality, not only for the believers, but, for the non-Muslims, even for the worst enemies, as well.

The first part of this paper describes the concept of peace in Islām and the role of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) as the messenger of the religion of peace. The second part of the paper focuses on the characteristics of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) as the messenger of peace in every aspect of life. While the third part of the paper is about the study of the historical facts, which discuss the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) as a historical figure and there is no doubt in his personality and character.

Keywords: Peace, Muḥammad (ﷺ), Sīrah, Non-Muslims, Enemies.

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Introduction of Islām as a Religion of Peace.

The non-Muslim writers, while dealing with the Islamic position of religious freedom, adopt negative contexts of the Qur'ānic āyāt, as well as, disregard the Sīrah of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), in order to draw incorrect conclusions.⁽¹⁾

However, the reality is different when the Qur'ān declares itself as the book testifying the previous revelations as stated in the Qur'ān:

﴿ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ
وَمُهَيِّمًا عَلَيْهِ ﴾⁽²⁾

And We have revealed to you, [O Muḥammad], the Book in truth, confirming that which preceded it of Scripture and as a criterion over it.

It means that the religious freedom is considered as an essential value in Islām. Therefore, the Muslims are obligated to ensure freedom and dignity of every human being on the face of the earth. Islamic teachings provide freedom, cherish it and guarantee it for the Muslims, as well as, for the non-Muslims. According to Islām, a man by birth is free from sin, disobedience, inherited inferiority and ancestral ignorance. As Allāh says:

﴿ فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا
تُبدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾⁽³⁾

So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the Fiṭrah of Allāh upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allāh. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.

The Qur'ān has clearly commanded that there is no compulsion (Ikrah) in al-Dīn (being a part of it).

﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ
وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ
عَلِيمٌ﴾⁽⁴⁾

There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Ṭāghūt and believes in Allāh has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allāh is Hearing and Knowing.

The Arabic word “al-Dīn” refers to the belief in Allāh, which establishes the system of Islām. But, that does not mean that embracing belief and practicing worships and morals can be imposed on people by force or compulsion, rather, it is a matter of choice and free will. Human beings are free to select or reject the choice of Hidāyah (the right path) with the liability to their own selves.⁽⁵⁾

The word Islām is derived from the Arabic root word “SALM” means peace, submission and obedience.⁽⁶⁾ In the Islamic terminology, the same word means submission to the will of Allāh and obedience to the law of Allāh i.e., al-Sharī‘ah. The one, who submits and obeys the law of Allāh, is called a Muslim. Being a Muslim one can achieve true and enjoy the lasting purity.⁽⁷⁾ If Islām has declared itself as a religion of peace and blessings, then, the messenger of Islām must be the practical demonstration of peace and blessings. Allāh, the Almighty, has entitled the Prophet Muḥammad in the Qur’ān as “Mercy to all the worlds”.

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾⁽⁸⁾

“And We have not sent you, [O Muḥammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.”

The Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) a Symbol of Mercy and Peace.

The study of Sīrah of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) proves that the personality of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is a source of mercy and peace, not only for the Muslims, but for all the people of all the times, beyond the limitations of color, race, and origin, territory, language and nation.

The attitude of a person toward his enemy reflects feelings of his behavior. However, when we look at the Prophet's attitude toward his enemies, we find it full of mercy, both at the collective and individual levels.

History has neither witness nor will witness again another human figure, whose presence, thought, action can exert such a profound impact on the humanity as did the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). Within the time period of twenty three years of the Prophethood, the prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) revolutionized the ignorant, ill-mannered and uncivilized people of the 'Arabs. Even he transformed them into the most spiritual, moral, and civilized nation of the world.⁽⁹⁾

3. The Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) in the views of the Historians.

The historical figures are always remembered for their main achievements and or failures. However, the actual personality of the historical figures often disappears behind the events or their achievements. Rarely have we found the glimpses of the character, traits or personal feelings of any such figure in detail. If we take the example of one of the most famous figures in history, Alexander, the Great (356-232), he has been evaluated as a just and a fair ruler, who was concerned for the public welfare, driven by the need of the public image or the political circumstances.⁽¹⁰⁾ Another example is of William Shakespeare, the world famous poet and the playwright with his excellent insight on human mind and psychology. But his

personal life is a mystery of the literary circles till today. The information about his personal life is not authentic or verified either he was a real character or an assumed name for someone else like Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) or Francis Bacon (1561-1626).⁽¹¹⁾ The historical figures are judged by the information, based on the evidences and the reliable proofs to verify the evidences.

The case in evaluating or verifying the information about the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) may be different from the other figures in history as the character and the personality of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) left remarkable impacts on the human life and society. These impacts are not left by power, politics or emotions, only, rather, by the rationality and the practical demonstration. Even the western work on the life and the personality of Jesus Christ (Peace be upon him) is not authentic and this fact annoys both the Christians and the Muslims.⁽¹²⁾ The Jewish work on the Prophet David (Dā'ūd) and Solomon [Sulaymān] (Peace be upon him) portrayed them as kings only, without highlighting their status as prophets.⁽¹³⁾ The only exception to all this is the character and the personality of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), whose picture is complete, authentic and reliable as a historical figure.⁽¹⁴⁾ Even today the life or Sīrah of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) characterizes as an ideal in different situations, events, feelings, likes and dislikes. There is no better description than the one described by the Qur'ān.

(15) ﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾

And We have not sent you, [O Muḥammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.

In the above mentioned āyah, the word 'worlds' demonstrates the worlds of all times, nations, colors, races, and origins. In other words, the mercy of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is not limited to the Muslims, but encompasses all the human beings on the earth. The word 'peace' can be personified through Sīrah of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) with all the meanings and comprehensions. The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) was a mercy even for his enemies and the non-Muslims.

The Prophet (SAW)’s Behavior with the non-Muslims.

There are several examples in Sīrah of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), which reflects his compassion, tolerance and mercy for the non-Muslims. Many a time, the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) proved as a mercy and a symbol of peace, even for his worst enemies. After the migration of Madīnah, the first covenant established between the Muslims and the Jews of Madīnah has been acknowledged as the first written treaty or covenant between the communities of two different faiths. Under this covenant, the Muslims and the Jews were considered definite members of one nation despite their different religious beliefs. This covenant was a written document of mutual help, cooperation, love, charity, consolation and protection between two different faiths and communities.⁽¹⁶⁾ The later treaties with the several Christian communities, especially, with Najrān and the St. The Catherin’s Monastery is the ideal examples of peaceful strategies of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) as the leader and the head of the state.⁽¹⁷⁾ The character and personality of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is the evidence for the harmonious relations with the Christians, the Jews, and the infidels of Makkah. The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) ‘s marriage with the daughter of Abū Sufyān, who was the head of the infidels of Makkah at that time, can be considered as an initiative for the establishment of peace with his enemies. Abū Sufyān was the worst enemy of Islām, when the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) married his daughter named Umm Ḥabībah.⁽¹⁸⁾

The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) treated the Christians, the Jews, and the infidels with such respect, integrity, and compassion that many of them eventually embraced Islām.

A Christian named ‘Addās was a servant of a Makkan aristocrat. He was sent to console the prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) while the prophet was returning from his visit to Ṭā’if.⁽¹⁹⁾ After meeting and listening to the prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), he declared to his master, “No one on the earth is better than him. He has revealed the real truth, which only a prophet can do”. The whole incident goes:

«قَالَ فَلَمَّا رَأَهُ ابْنَا رِبْعَةَ، عُتْبَةُ وَشَيْبَةُ وَمَا لَقِيَ تَحَرَّكَتْ لَهُ رِحْمُهُمَا، فَدَعَوْا غُلَامًا هُمَا نَصْرَانِيًّا، يُقَالُ لَهُ عَدَّاسٌ فَقَالَا لَهُ خُذْ قِطْعًا (مِنْ هَذَا) الْعِيبِ فَضَعُهُ فِي هَذَا الطَّبَقِ ثُمَّ اذْهَبْ بِهِ إِلَى ذَلِكَ الرَّجُلِ فَقُلْ لَهُ يَا كَلِّ مِنْهُ. فَفَعَلَ عَدَّاسٌ ثُمَّ أَقْبَلَ بِهِ حَتَّى وَضَعَهُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُلْ فَلَمَّا وَضَعَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِيهِ يَدَهُ قَالَ بِاسْمِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ أَكَلَ فَتَنَظَرَ عَدَّاسٌ فِي وَجْهِهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ وَاللَّهِ إِنَّ هَذَا الْكَلَامَ مَا يَقُولُهُ أَهْلُ هَذِهِ الْبِلَادِ فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ أَيِّ الْبِلَادِ أَنْتَ يَا عَدَّاسُ وَمَا دِينُكَ؟ قَالَ نَصْرَانِيٌّ ، وَأَنَا رَجُلٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ نِينَوَى، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنْ قَرِيَّةِ الرَّجُلِ الصَّالِحِ يُوسُسَ بْنِ مَتَّى، فَقَالَ لَهُ عَدَّاسٌ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ مَا يُوسُسُ بْنُ مَتَّى؟ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ذَلِكَ أَخِي، كَانَ نَبِيًّا وَأَنَا نَبِيٌّ ، فَأَكَبَّ عَدَّاسٌ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يُقَبِّلُ رَأْسَهُ وَيَدَيْهِ وَقَدَمَيْهِ»⁽²⁰⁾

The owners of the garden, 'Utbah Ibn Rabī'ah and Shaybah Ibn Rabī'ah felt sorry for the Prophet (ﷺ) and they told their servant, whose name was Addās to bring him a bunch of grapes. Before eating, the Prophet S.A.W said "Bismi'llāh". The servant was surprised and remarked that the people of Thaqīf did not say that when they ate. When the Prophet S.A.W. asked him about his homeland and his religion, he told him that he was a Christian from Nineveh in 'Irāq. The messenger S.A.W. said. "From the city of the righteous man, Yūnus Ibn Mattā?" Addās said to him, "How do you know about Yūnus Ibn Mattā?" The messenger of Allāh S.A.W. said, "He is my brother. He was a Prophet and I am a Prophet". Addās embraced the messenger of Allāh S.A.W. and kissed his head, hands and feet.

After the victory against Banū Naḍīr (the Jewish tribe) the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) pardoned the Jewish woman, widow of

Salām Ibn Miskam, who had prepared a poisoned roasted lamb for the Prophet and his companions in revenge of the defeat.⁽²¹⁾ The widow of leader of the Jews of Khyber, named Ṣafiyah bint Ḥuyayy, eventually got married with the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) by her choice. She was forgiven along with all the Jewish women. She accepted the proposal of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) for marriage and refused to go back to the Jewish community.⁽²²⁾ After the conquest of Khyber, the Jews were not expelled from their homeland. The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) forgave them and entitled them citizenship rights, as the minorities of the Islamic State. They were provided protection by the Islamic state on paying Jizyah (the protection tax) benefiting their status as Ahl al-Kitāb, the people of the book).⁽²³⁾ Gradually, when the Islamic state expanded through the dominions of the Muslims, such privileges were extended to the other religious minorities, too, such as the Christians, the Ṣābiyans, Hindūs, and Buddhist.⁽²⁴⁾ This protection tax, Jizyah, entitled them peace, which came essentially in the form of protection from harm. The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)'s treatment with the Jews with justice and equality continued even after some events when the Jews tried to harm the Muslims and the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). In spite of the Muslims' reservations of sincerity of the Jews of Madīnah, the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) continued to deal with them fairly and justly. The evidence to this fact is the last report of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) at the time of death that a Jew was holding his armour as collateral for the barley, which the Prophet Muḥammad had (ﷺ) purchased from him. It is narrated by 'Ā'ishah:

«أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ اشْتَرَى طَعَامًا مِنْ يَهُودِيٍّ إِلَى أَجَلٍ،
وَرَهْنَهُ دِرْعًا مِنْ حَدِيدٍ»⁽²⁵⁾

The Prophet purchased barley from a Jew for an appointed time. He gave his armour of iron as collateral for it.

Some reports tell that the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) used to give them respect as human beings.

«كَانَ سَهْلُ ابْنِ حُنَيْفٍ وَقَيْسُ بْنُ سَعْدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ بْنِ عُبَادَةَ بِالْقَادِسِيَّةِ فَمَرَّ عَلَيْهِمَا بِجَنَازَةٍ فَقَامَا فَقِيلَ لُهُمَا إِنَّهَا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ فَقَالَا مَرَّ عَلَيَّ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِجَنَازَةٍ فَقَامَ فَقِيلَ لَهُ إِنَّهُ يَهُودِيٌّ فَقَالَ أَلَيْسَتْ نَفْسًا»⁽²⁶⁾

It is reported that while two companions of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) Abū Umāmah Sahl Ibn Ḥanīf and Qays Ibn Sa'd were in Qādsiyyah, a funeral procession passed by them. Upon seeing them, they stood up in respect. They were informed that it was the funeral of a non-Muslim. They replied that once a funeral procession passed by the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) and the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) stood up in respect. And when informed that it was the funeral of a Jew. He remarked, "Was he not a human being?"

The message of the Qur'ān and the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) was peace and justice. In the Qur'ān, Allāh, the Almighty, did not prohibit the Muslims from making peace with those who did not fight the Muslims.⁽²⁷⁾ But, He instructed them to fight those who expelled the Muslims from their homes. Moreover, the Qur'ān categorically instructs the Muslims to accept the proposal for peace from their enemy, trusting in Allāh, because Allāh is sufficient for everything. The Qur'ān says:

﴿وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ﴾⁽²⁸⁾

"But if your enemy inclines towards peace, then you should also incline towards peace and trust in Allāh

The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) followed this instruction of the Qur'ān and never missed any chance of peace making covenant with the enemies. However, while the treaty of Ḥudaybiyah was being drafted, the attitude and clauses of the leaders of the infidels of Makkah were not based on justice and equality, rather, they were provocative for the companions of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). But the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) accepted these clauses only for the establishment of peace. It is reported:

« أَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولُهُ، لَنْ أُخَالِفَ أَمْرَهُ، وَلَنْ يُضَيِّعَنِي »⁽²⁹⁾

“I am the servant of Allāh and his prophet. I can’t disobey against his order and He will not let me go waste.

FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH:

The following messages of peace can be derived from the above discussion and narrations:

- The compassion of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) was not limited to the Muslims only, but for the non-Muslims, too, even for his worst enemies.
- The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)’s love for Allāh and the humanity inspires and dominates the lives of all the sincere and the honest human beings, beyond the barriers of faith, caste, nation, origin, and creed for over more than fourteen hundred years till now.
- Since Allāh bears the qualities of al-Raḥmān (the Most Gracious) and al-Raḥīm (the Most Merciful), simply, the Messenger of Allāh, Muḥammad (ﷺ), demonstrates the qualities as the merciful and the gracious for all the worlds.
- The fact is that the quality of peace, equality, and justice are linked with his Prophet-hood.

﴿ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴾⁽³⁰⁾

And We have not sent you, [O Muḥammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.

- The Islamic community, as the followers of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is obliged to ensure freedom and dignity of every human being both for the Muslims, as well as, the non-Muslims.

CONCLUSION:

Scrutiny of Sīrah of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) reveals that he was a pure personification of the principles of peace and tolerance for the Muslims and the non-Muslims, even for his worst enemies. The analysis of his conduct, sayings, and practice with the non-Muslims and his enemies are the model and modus operandi for the foreign policy makers as a symbol of peace, Justice, and tolerance, transcending the national boundaries to resolve conflicts. Finally, the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his followers cannot be blamed for the misdeeds of some of the Muslims, even if they carry out their activities in the name of Islām, as long as these misdeeds contradict the teachings of the Qur'ān and Sīrah of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), who was sent as the mercy and the peace for the entire humanity for all their individual and collective affairs, including the Muslims, the non-Muslims and even the enemies, too. The study of the foreign policies of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is an ideal model and an example for making relations with other communities, nations, beliefs and states.

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- 27) al-Qur’ān, 6: 8.
- 28) al-Qur’ān, 8: 61.
- 29) Ibn Hisham *al-Sīrah al-Nabwiyyah*, ed. 2nd, Vol. 2 (Egypt: Sharīkah Maktabah wa Maṭba‘ Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955), 317.
- 30) al-Qur’ān, 21:107.
