

World Peace in the Light of Sīrah
of the Prophet Muḥammad PBUH

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ABSTRACT

The advancement in science and technology has made the world peace and prosperity very important at this time in the human history. We find in the human history, since it was recorded, that almost all the civilizations were very intolerant, brutal to their opponents, especially, to the believers of other religions. On the other hand, the Islamic states were the most tolerant and accommodating to other religions. This fact is proved from the early history of Islām during the period of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his immediate successors. Similar is the case in the later history of the Muslims, during the period of the Abbasid, the Umayyids in Spain, the Turks, the Mughal era and in the Far East. Human and economic losses in wars were very huge during the first, the second world wars, and the current wars being fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. The human and material losses are horrible. The author believes that the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)'s teachings and traditions of moderation, tolerance, human respect, freedom of religious practice are the only ways to peace and prosperity in the world.

Keywords: Peace, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Hadīth, tolerance, moderation, acceptance.

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World peace is very important in the current geopolitical situation. The advancement in science has changed the world into a global village and as a result, the communication among individuals and nations is very fast. Time and space barrier has almost disappeared. Science has provided comfort and convenience on the one side, and, on the other side, has created mass destruction weapons. Human killing was never as easy as it is now. Thus, the situation has taken far more very serious a shape as compared to what it was fourteen hundred years before. The world is just a bag, filled with explosive, which needs its fuse to be pulled as mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān:

﴿وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ۗ وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُم مِّنْهَا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ءَايَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ﴾⁽¹⁾

And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allāh (i.e. This Qur'ān), and be not divided among yourselves, and remember Allāh's favour on you, for you were enemies one to another, but He joined your hearts together, so that, by his Grace, you became brethren (in the Islamic faith), and you were on the brink of a pit of fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allāh makes his Āyāt (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.,) clear to you, that you may be guided.)

In these circumstances, the peace and its effectiveness in the world community and in the individual nation is very vital on the one side, and the methodology to adopt for peace is, on the other side. If we look at the human history since it was recorded from Babylon in Mesopotamia to the twentieth century with modern weapons, we see that the best tested methodology is the guidelines provided and implemented by the prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) during the eleven years of his leadership as the head of the state.

What is peace? Peace means an act to stop war or it is freedom from war and violence.

Religious Extremism in History:

All the religious leaders and the reformers preached peace, but their followers, for many reasons, forgot the lesson and fought wars and killed their opponents and those who differ from them.

In Hinduism, there were wars between Pandavas and Kauravas.⁽²⁾ In their Holy book it is quoted “Allow them to kill the opponent”.⁽³⁾

In another holy book, it is said that the untouchable (Shūdhār) are not allowed to read and touch the holy book. It is reported in their holy book:

“Ram kills ‘Shambhūka’ an untouchable saint for worshipping God for the Hindu caste system did not permit untouchables to worship God”.⁽⁴⁾

In Judaism, the Jews were very harsh on the non-Jews when they were in power. The Christians became victims of the Jews during the fifties and sixties B.H (before Hijrah) in Najrān (Yemen). The Jews always treated themselves special and sacred race as compared to other human beings. The attempt to crucify Jesus was due to religious intolerance. Similarly, the Jews became victim of the Persians in Iran and Iraq. Jerusalem was destroyed. Similarly, they were attacked by the Romans. They were made slaves by the Pharaohs in Egypt. There is a long history of the Jews, victimizing others and becoming victims of others brutality.

Christianity has also a history full of blood and fire. In the fifth century A.D., the war between the Catholics and the non-Catholics took thousand of human lives. During the Roman rule, when the Catholicism was the official religion, the life for the non-Catholics and the Jews was very hard. In the fifth century, the Christian Church was very harsh and did not allow the non-Christian to live safely. The king Constantine and Hercules killed the non-

Christian.⁽⁵⁾ In the recent history, the Muslims were killed in Bosnia and Serbia during the United Nations Peace Missions due to the religious extremism.

In Buddhism, the Buddha's teachings for peace are very important. He preached seclusion and isolation, but when his followers got power, they were very hard on the non-Buddhists. The period of Ghandhārā rule (Ashoka and Kāshik in India) was good only for the Buddha's followers; Hindus were living a very hard life. In the recent days, the Muslims were killed in Myanmar (Burma) and the same happened in Philippine.

In Zoroastrianism, its history is not different from Hinduism. During his rule in Persia, the king Perveyz attacked the capital Jerusalem, destroyed the temples, and killed many thousand Christians and also twenty six thousand Jews.

Islām and Tolerance:

Islām has a different history; the leader of Islām (Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)) himself signed the first treaty on his migration from Makkah to Madīnah with different communities living in and around Madīnah, called Yathrib at that time. This treaty is called the Treaty of Madīnah. Mawlānā Ṣafī al-Reḥmān writes about this situation:

“The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) faced three different nations of the society in Madīnah. “These were the Muslims, the Jews, and the ancient tribes of Madīnah. The problems of every nation were totally different from others”.⁽⁶⁾

It was among all the communities living in Madīnah i.e., the Jews, the Muslims, the non-Muslim, the pagans and other religions. Every religion and culture were not only recognized, but also given full freedom to practice it.

In Holy Qur'ān, the followers of Ibrāhīmīc religions are invited to dialogue:

﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَامٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ
إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ﴾⁽⁷⁾

(Say O Muḥammad (ﷺ): "O people of the Scripture (The Jews and The Christians): come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allāh, and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allāh. Then, if they turn away, say: "Bear witness that we are Muslims".

Later, when Islām became a power in the region under the leadership of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), he also signed a treaty with the Christian community living in Najrān. Huzyfah reports that two men came from Najran and requested the prophet (ﷺ) to send a trustworthy man with them:

«فَالَا إِنَّا نُعْطِيكَ مَا سَأَلْتَنَا، وَابْعَثْ مَعَنَا رَجُلًا أَمِينًا، وَلَا تَبْعَثْ مَعَنَا إِلَّا
أَمِينًا. فَقَالَ: "لَأَبْعَثَنَّ مَعَكُمْ رَجُلًا أَمِينًا حَقَّ أَمِينٍ". فَاسْتَشْرَفَ لَهُ
أَصْحَابُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ " فَمَنْ يَا أَبَا عُيَيْدَةَ بْنَ
الْجَرَّاحِ ". فَلَمَّا قَامَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " هَذَا أَمِينٌ هَذِهِ
الْأُمَّةُ "»⁽⁸⁾

The both of them said (to the Prophet (ﷺ), "We will give what you should ask but you should send a trustworthy man with us, and do not send any person with us but an honest one." The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "I will send an honest man who Is really trustworthy." Then every one of the companions of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) wished to be that one. Then the Prophet said, "Get up, O Abu 'Ubaida bin Al-Jarrah." When he got up, Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "This is the Trustworthy man of this (Muslim) nation".

It was the pact signed by the Muslims and the Christians of Najrān. According to this treaty, the Christians had full freedom to practice their religion and culture and live their life freely. They

were exempted from compulsory security services, rather, they were provided security against the payment of a tax called Jizyah (reward for services). A similar treaty was signed by the second Caliph ‘Umar, the great, with the Christians of Syria (Jerusalem) at the surrender of Jerusalem. During the period of ‘Umar, which started three years after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), the churches used to be given the financial support by the Islamic state. This tradition and the system continued during the period of the Umayyid’s and the Abbasid’s rule in the Middle East and the Umayyid’s rule in Spain. During the Crusades, the Muslim rulers (e.g. Saladin) let the Christians armies go freely, while thousand of the Muslims had been slaughtered by the Christian armies before it, when they conquered Palestine.⁽⁹⁾ The Ottoman Empire was also very generous with the non-Muslim communities.⁽¹⁰⁾ Similarly, the Mughals were generous with the Hindus in India.

We need peace, if there is no *peace* among the world communities, then, there will be no war. The losses caused by the wars since 1910 are as follows:

The First World War (1914-18): It is estimated that 37 million: over 16 million deaths and 20 million wounded.⁽¹¹⁾

The Second World War (1939-45): World War II fatality statistics vary, with estimates of total dead ranging from 50 million to more than 80 million.⁽¹²⁾ Twenty million people were affected by the war related diseases. Apart from these losses, the genocide of the Jews, the Romanian and the Armenians is an agony in the human history.

I am not reporting the figures from the wars of Vietnam, Cambodia and Korea, which were the result of the conflict between the super powers. In the recent wars, the loss of Iraq war, which started on the preemptive basis, the loss of human life was between 151,000 to over one million⁽¹³⁾ The economic cost to USA is 4.4 trillion dollars for the period 2003-2011. Afghanistan is over and extra. The amount spent from 2001 to 2014 in US dollars is 4374.5 billion, a major portion of the cost is following:

- 823.8 Billion US Dollars on Iraq.
 718.6 Billion US dollars on Afghanistan
 836.0 Billion US dollars on Pentagon Bases
 471.0 Billion US dollars on Home land security
 160.0 Billion US dollars on Veteran Care
 315.0 Billion US Dollars on interest on borrowing.
 29.0 Billion US Dollars on Noble Eagle
 19.0 Billion US Dollars to Pakistan on war against terrorism. ⁽¹⁴⁾

In spite of these huge human and economic losses, the main problem is still there and the situation is like there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

Considering the present situation and the losses caused by the wars, the need for world peace is far more urgent and important, now, than it was ever in the past. The present political systems and the other religions are unable to deliver peace to the world. Now, I would like to highlight the policy laid down by Islām for community peace and inter religious understanding.

Islām and Peace:

The meaning of Islām is peace. When a Muslim meets another Muslim, he greets him by saying al-Salām ‘Alaykum, peace be with you. This term started by the Prophet (ﷺ) of Islām. In the Qur’ān the following Āyah clearly gives the message of peace:

﴿مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَن قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ
 نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ
 أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا
 بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ إِن كَثِيرًا بَعَدَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ﴾ ⁽¹⁵⁾

because of that we ordained for the Children of Israel that if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in

the land - it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind. And indeed, there came to them Our Messengers with clear proofs, evidences, and signs, even then after that many of them continued to exceed the limits (e.g. by doing oppression unjustly and exceeding beyond the limits set by Allāh by committing the major sins) in the land!

The Prophet (ﷺ) of Islām always liked moderation, religious tolerance and individual respect in the social behaviour. A Few quotations from the Holy Qur'ān will be sufficient to prove it:

﴿ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرْنَاكَ اللَّهُ وَلَا

تَكُنَ لِلْظَّالِمِينَ خَصِيمًا ﴾⁽¹⁶⁾

Surely, We have sent down to you (O Muḥammad) the Book (this Qur'ān) in truth that you might judge between men by that which Allāh has shown you (i.e. has taught you through the divine inspiration), so be not a pleader for the treacherous.)

﴿ قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبِغَى رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا

عَلَيْهَا وَلَا نَزْرُؤُا وَإِزْرًا وَزَرَّ أُخْرَىٰ ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا رُجُوعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ

تَخْلِفُونَ ﴾⁽¹⁷⁾

(Say: "Shall I seek a lord other than Allāh, while He is the Lord of all things? No person earns any (sin) except against himself (only), and no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another. Then unto your Lord is your return, so He will tell you that wherein you have been differing.)

Moderation is a very important principle for all the human attitudes and policies, whether it is at the individual level or as state policies. The Qur'ānic guidance is:

﴿ وَأَقِصْ فِي مَسْئِكَ وَأَعِضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ

الْحَمِيرِ ﴾⁽¹⁸⁾

And be moderate (or show no insolence) in your walking, and lower your voice. Verily, the harshest of all voices is the voice (braying) of the ass.

Similarly, in another Āyah, the command is:

﴿قُلِ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيًّا مَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَلَا

بَجَهْرٍ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا خَفَاتٍ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا﴾⁽¹⁹⁾

Say (O Muḥammad): "Invoke Allāh or invoke the Most Beneficent (Allāh), by whatever name you invoke Him (it is the same), for to Him belong the best names. And offer your Ṣalāh (prayer) neither aloud nor in a low voice, but follow a way between."

The difference among human beings is a part of their natural capabilities; tolerance is the best way of teaching:

﴿وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مِنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ

حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ﴾⁽²⁰⁾

and had your Lord willed, those on the earth would have believed, all of them together. So, will you (O Muḥammad) then compel mankind, until they become believers.

The prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) delivered sermon during his last pilgrimage in Makkah on the 9th Dhū al-Ḥajj, which is the final charter of peace and the human rights for a Muslim society, but it is equally useful for the world community. He said:

O' People! Listen to my words, for I do not know whether we shall ever meet again and perform Ḥajj after this year. O' people! Allāh says, O' people We created you from one male and one female, and made you into tribes and nations, so as to be known to one another. Verily, in the sight of Allāh, the most honoured amongst you is the one who is the most God-fearing. There is no superiority for an 'Arab over a non-'Arab and for a non-'Arab over an 'Arab, nor for the white over the black nor for the black over the white except in God-consciousness.⁽²¹⁾

He was so concerned that he instructed his followers to spread his message to those who are not attending the meeting. Then he said “Have I conveyed the message”. The crowd, which was around a hundred thousand, replied “Indeed, you have conveyed the message.”

A Ḥadīth is reported by Ibn ‘Abbās that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«وَأَيُّكُمْ وَالْعُلُوِّ فِي الدِّينِ، فَإِنَّمَا أَهْلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ أَعْلُو فِي الدِّينِ»⁽²²⁾

“Be careful from extremism (GHULUW) in your religion. Indeed, the old nations before you were destroyed due to extremism in their religion.”

In another Ḥadīth, the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

«صِنْفَانِ مِنْ أُمَّتِي لَأَتْنَاهُمَا شَفَاعَتِي: إِمَامٌ عَشُومٌ وَ عَالٍ فِي الدِّينِ»⁽²³⁾

“The two groups among my Ummah will never be granted my intercession: the one is the cruel and the unfair ruler and the second group is which exercises extremism in the religion. I not only disassociate from these, but will be a hostile witness on the Day of Judgment.

In another Ḥadīth, Prophet (ﷺ) explained the situation in which most of the people waste their energies on non-productive issues and create confusions and misunderstandings among masses. It is reported by Abū Tha‘labah al-khashnī. He said that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

«إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَرَضَ فَرَائِضَ فَلَا تُضَيِّعُوهَا وَ حَدَّ حُدُودًا فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَ نَهَى عَنِ أَشْيَاءَ فَلَا تَنْتَهِكُوهَا»⁽²⁴⁾

“That Allāh has declared some action as compulsory, so, do not ignore these, and fixed some boundaries for you, do not trespass these boundaries and

prohibited some things, do not go near to these and left some things intentionally, do not involve in those. ”

The Prophet’s Character:

According to ‘Ā’ishah, the wife of the prophet (ﷺ), the character of the prophet (ﷺ) was a living Qur’ān. Some of his qualities relating to peace and harmony among human beings are mentioned here:

Politeness was a quality of his character. Allāh has given command for politeness in the human character.

﴿فَمَا رَحِمَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ لَئِن لَّهُمْ لَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ

حَوْلِكَ فَأَعُفْ عَنْهُمْ وَأَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى

اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

And by the Mercy of Allāh, you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you; so pass over (their faults), and ask (Allāh's) forgiveness for them; and consult them in the affairs. Then, when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allāh, Certainly, Allāh loves those who put their trust (in Him).

The Prophet (ﷺ) was always polite and kind in his personal behaviour with the non-Muslim and the Muslims equally, except for the enforcement of law.

Acceptability of the other faiths: Islamic society is accommodating to other faiths. In the Qur’ān, it is mentioned that other faiths are the part of the human social culture. see the reference 21.

Prohibition of Harassments:

According to the Qur’ānic teachings, there is no enforcement or intimidation for the change of religion in Islām, this is mentioned in the following verse:

﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ
وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ
عَلِيمٌ﴾ (26)

There is no compulsion in the religion. Verily, the right path has become distinct from the wrong path. Whoever disbelieves in Tāghūt and believes in Allāh, Then, he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break. And Allāh is All-Hearer, All-Knower.

In a Ḥadīth, the Prophet PBUH has prohibited carrying weapons into the places of worship, in markets or with the intention to fight with other people, who are at peace.

«خِصَالٌ لَا تَنْبَغِي فِي الْمَسْجِدِ لَا يُتَّخَذُ طَرِيقًا وَلَا يُشَهَّرُ فِيهِ سِلَاحٌ وَلَا
يُنْبَضُ فِيهِ بَقَوسٌ وَلَا يُنْشَرُ فِيهِ نَبْلٌ وَلَا يُمْرُ فِيهِ بِلَحْمٍ نِيءٍ وَلَا يُضْرَبُ فِيهِ
حَدٌّ وَلَا يُفْتَضُّ فِيهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ وَلَا يُتَّخَذُ سَوْقًا» (27)

Another Ḥadīth, which is reported by Anas, says that the Apostle of Allāh said:

«مَنْ صَلَّى صَلَاتَنَا وَاسْتَقْبَلَ قِبْلَتَنَا وَأَكَلَ ذَبِيحَتَنَا فَذَلِكَ الْمُسْلِمُ الَّذِي لَهُ
ذِمَّةُ اللَّهِ وَذِمَّةُ رَسُولِهِ فَلَا تُخْفَرُوا اللَّهَ فِي ذِمَّتِهِ» (28)

“Who prays our prayer, and faces to our Qiblah (direction during prayer), eats our food (Halāl), he is Muslim and he is in the protection of Allāh. Do not harm those who are in the protection of Allāh.”

Tolerance:

Tolerance is one of the important qualities, which is highly emphasized in the Qur’ānic and the Prophetic teachings. Similarly, moderation is an important quality for a Muslim in his social behaviour. In a Ḥadīth, which is reported by Ibn ‘Umar, he says that he heard from the Prophet (ﷺ) say:

«لَا تَرْجِعُوا بَعْدِي كُفْرًا، يَضْرِبُ بَعْضُكُمْ رِقَابَ بَعْضٍ» (29)

“Do not revert to Kufr after my death and start cutting throats of one and other.”

In another Ḥadīth, it is said that:

«وخير الأعمال أوسطها»⁽³⁰⁾

“the best human behaviour is the moderate behaviour. ”

A Muslim society or some other states, which practices the above guidelines in their societies, will be enjoying the best inter communal harmonious relationships. In the present situation, these qualities are very important to be introduced and practiced in the multicultural societies to create harmony, cohesion and coexistence.

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