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PROPHET MUḤAMMAD (SAW) AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The Sīrah of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) in contemporary times, as it always has been the best method of effectively projecting the message of Islam communication of which is- the most significant of all the intents of Islamic law within the general human environment. Time and again, It is and should be, our first priority to introduce mankind the teachings of Prophet Muḥammad, the last in the series of primordial Religion-Islam. The humanitarian and universalistic principles enshrined in the Qur'an are epitomized and practically manifested in the Sīrah of Prophet Muḥammad (SAW). He passed through various stages in his life and experienced many situations, as do ordinary beings with human feelings and aspirations, pain and hardships, but his moral conclusions were always unblemished and his rulings free from human errors and weaknesses. His life being universal is therefore, a perfect model and example for mankind transcending artificial boundaries of time and space, in order to finish happiness and peace in their individual as well in social life. But, irony of the matter is that he and his followers has been depicted as the staunch opponent of humanity especially for those who don't share faith with him or them, as they put it. As such, the present paper is an attempt to show how the Prophetic injunctions in regard to the regulations of the inter-community relations can be adopted to counter futile clashes without departing from the basic Islamic fundamentals in order to reveal the things as they really are enshrined in Prophet's Sīrah for mutual understanding and cooperation for a pluralistic society we live in.

KEYWORD: Primordial religion, Whole man, primordial man, tremendous nature, Vicegerency

INTRODUCTION

The Sīrah of the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) is today, as it always has been the best method of effectively projecting the message of Islam. It is and should be, our first priority to introduce mankind the teachings of Prophet, the last in the series of primordial Religion-Islam¹. The humanitarian and universalistic principles

enshrined in the Qur'ān are epitomized and practically manifested in the *Sīrah* of Prophet Muḥammad.² The word *Sīrah* in Arabic language is derived from *Sara Yasiru*, which means 'to travel' or 'to be on a journey'.

When attributed to a person, it means the person's journey through life. It is in this sense, *Sīrah* is used for biography. The other dictionary means of *Sīrah* are 'conduct', 'behavior', 'way of life, and way of acting. In the Qur'ān, the word *Sīrah* is used in the same meaning as "condition or form." Therefore, a person's *Sīrah* includes not only his life sketch but a detailed account of it from his birth to death, the events related to it and also his conduct, behavior, Personal traits etc.³ In Islamic terminology, the word *Sīrah* is used for the biography of Prophet Muḥammad from his birth to death and all the events related to it in a chronological order. His personality illuminates every aspect of human life and in every field of human activity, his conduct is perfect and a beacon light for others.⁴ He passed through various stages in his life and experienced many situations, as do ordinary beings with human feelings and aspirations, pain and hardships. But his moral conclusions were always unblemished and his wisdom and judgment perfect and free from human errors and weaknesses. His life is therefore, a perfect model and example for men and women of all ages, working in many professions to follow in order to obtain happiness and peace in their individual as well in social life as his only purpose was to forge a new relationship between God and mankind.⁵

The issues linked to the relations with other human beings are vital and delicate. In multi-cultural and multi-religious societies that are composed of people having different philosophies of life and social norms, the delicacy of such issues is multiplied. In such scenarios, personal

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¹ A Fazlur Rahman, *Encyclopedia of Sirah*, London: The Muslim School Trust, 1985, vol.1, p.7

² Qur'ān 33:21

³ Parvez A.Bhatt, *Pluralism and Sirah literature*, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Submitted to the Deptt., of Islamic Studies, AMU, Aligarh, 2013, p.30

⁴ Qur'ān 68:4

⁵ Barnaby Rogerson, "The Prophet Muḥammad: A Biography," in, Abdul Wahhab El-Affendi, *About Muhammad- The other Western perspective on the Prophet of Islam*, UK: Legacy Publishing Ltd, 2010, p.85

and social inclinations, bias, and several other factors obstruct the rule of justice and equity and thus the instance of misconduct, transgression, discrimination, persecution and injustice become more likely to happen.⁶ When the Qur’anic discourse employs the address, “O mankind!” (2:21 and elsewhere) or, “O man!” (82:16 and elsewhere), this is not limited to the call to faith but rather on reason and logic. People are being addressed on the basis of their innate, God given understanding and perception, and are being called upon to embrace universal human interests which no one could dispute. However, given the fact that such principles cannot be translated into particular, practical rulings which address all human beings as creatures accountable to the lord of the worlds, the burden of striving to apply them then falls upon believers. The implementation of such principles, therefore, represents the goal of Muslim’s foreign policy in their dealings with others. As such, given the preceding, universal or practical rulings as they apply to humanity as a whole may be identified as:

1. ***Mutual understanding, cooperation and integration***: in these words addressed to all mankind, “*O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other), verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous of you, and Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted.*” (49:13) and at other Qur’ān states: “*O mankind! Fear your guardian lord who created you from a single person, created out of in his mate and from them twain scattered countless men and women; fear Allah through whom ye demand your mutual rights, and be heedful of the wombs that bore you: for Allah ever watches you*” (4:1) the Qur’ān declares that despite the diversity of their peoples and tribes, people have a common origin and the purpose behind this variety is that people should come know one another. At the same time it declares that distinction and honor are to be based on a spiritual criterion, namely consciousness of God, which has nothing to do with any accidents of birth which is demeaning to the humanity. These principles are affirmed by the Prophetic teachings “*All of you belong to ‘Adam and he was created from clay*”⁷ and “*No Arab shall be deemed superior to a non*

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⁶ See for further discussion, Tanveer Ahmad, “Muslim non-Muslim relations: A study of the Qur’an and Hadith regulating the relevant jurisprudential debate” in *Insights*, Islamabad: Dawah Academy, vol.3, issue, 1, 2010, p.6 ⁷ Qur’an 3:59

*Arab and a white to a black...*⁸” the intent of cooperation arises as a compliment to the intent of mutual understanding. Similarly, the intent of integration serves to support the twin intents of mutual understanding and cooperation.⁹

2. ***Achieving world peace based on justice:*** The established principle is that the fundamental relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is that of peace: “*But if they incline to peace, incline thou to it as well...*” (8:61), and that resorting to war is only allowed in Islam when there is a need to repel aggression. The peace sought one which is based on justice; after all, peace and justice is inseparable, not only limited to Islamic society; on the contrary, it has been a fundamental intent in human relations throughout history.¹⁰ Indeed, the Prophet spoke in praise of the alliance (*Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl*) in which he took part before he was called as a Prophet, saying, “*If I had been invited to take part in as a Muslim, I would have done so.*”¹¹ And in like manner, the Qur’ān urges believers to adhere faithfully to covenants and contracts. In doing so, it confirms Islam’s respect for international treaties, which are the primary source of law among sovereign states. Muhammad was full of love and mercy for all. He loved his friends and showed mercy even to his enemies. He was a symbol of love and affection and a living model for mercy of mankind. As an orphan, he always helped other people especially the poor, widows and orphans. He lived a very simple, peaceful life and was respected and kind to his friends, generous, sympathetic and helpful to the poor and needy and truthful and considerate to all. He was completely faithful in respect of his promises and trusts to his friends as well as to his enemies. As a young man, he was actively participated in forming a confederacy among the Makkan tribes for maintaining peace in the region and for suppressing any violence and injustice and for upholding the rights of the weak, the poor and the destitute, this was known as *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl*. In the Islamic traditions, recognition of diversity and practice of pluralism is upheld from the very beginning of Prophet Muḥammad’s mission as a Prophet. Even before

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⁸ Safi al-Rahman Mubarakpuri, *al-Rahiq al-Makhtum*, ed., A.Malik Mujahid, India: Dar al-Salam, 2008, pp.538-546

⁹ Gamal al-Din Attia, *Maqasid al-Shari’ah: A Functional Approach*, USA:IIIT, 2007, pp.142-143

¹⁰ Ibid, see also Qur’an 57:25

¹¹ Ibn Hisham cited in, Safi al-Rahman Mubarakpuri, op.cit., p.109

Prophethood, he actively engaged in the socio-political and economic life of his society for the promotion of peace and justice. His presence at the occasion of truce of virtuous (*Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl*) and his appellation of the event in the Prophetic period; and his successful and wise attempt of peace keeping and reconciliation among the rival tribes claiming to put the black stone (*Ḥijr-i Aswad*) in its place in the holy Ka'ba are some of the examples of his social engagement before attaining the Prophetic office. With the commencement of his mission “Islam began as minority tradition in a non-Muslim setting. The most important aspect of *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl* is Prophet Muhammad’s participation in the alliance. The accounts of the articles in *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl* are both short and detailed in different sources. However, with some variations in the narration, they convey the same spirit of the solemn effort to fight against oppression, exploitation and persecution. Anyway, the historical alliance of *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl* acted in an effective institution grievance redressed in a time when there was no other arrangement. However, after the proper execution of justice by the Islamic state, it would have lost its relevance and therefore it demised. In Makkah, there were pagan Arabs, *Ḥunafa*, Jews and Christian as well. Thus, prophet attempts to form *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl* indicates that the prophet tried to reach out to the people of other faiths and building bridges on the basis of compassion and fellow feeling. Medina was mostly inhabited by Jews, Christian Arabs and pagans. After reaching Medina, the first thing he did was to enter into an understanding with the Jews of Medina through the popular treaty *Mīthāq-i Madīna* (the constitution of *Madīna*). It was not only the most renowned alliance ever heard of in Arabia, but it is also the most significant even in the pre-Prophetic *Sirah* of Prophet Muḥammad, from the view point of pluralism and diversity. The alliance was concluded in a society-*Jahiliya* Arabia which had practically no positive law to secure individual freedom and civil liberty. Fazlur Rahman Faridi has dealt with the historical alliance of *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl* in his outstanding work on Muslim conduct in a plural society, probably the first comprehensive work on the challenges of pluralism for Muslims in a multi-faith society, in the light of the Qur’an, the Prophets model and the subsequent events of Islamic history. For him, “it was an agreement to fight together against evil and injustice, a concerned endeavor in which the polytheists, atheists and believers in the unity of ‘Allah all joined¹². Other Aligarh based scholar Radi al-Islam Nadwi has discussed the alliance of *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl* thoroughly in his research paper “*Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl: Aṣri Maanviyat*”, published in a reputed Urdu quarterly “*Tehqiqat-i Islami*”, in the concluding lines, he writes: “In the Prophets endorsement of *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl*, it can be derived that in a multi-faith society, cooperation can be made with the people of other faiths on common grounds. In this regard, the basic principle of Islam ‘cooperate with others

in the work of goodness and piety and do not cooperate in evil and oppression” guides us¹³. The Prophet had a brilliant skill which he used in the service of mitigating conflicts between the rival claimants and groups with varied interests. Muhammad Abu Nimer discusses Prophet Muhammad’s creative skills of conflict resolution in a non-violent manner during his early age before the Prophethood. In his paper, ‘A framework for non-violence and peace building in Islam, he observes: “The Prophet’s intervention in resolving the problem of the black stone in Makkah is a classic example of peace building. It illustrates the creativity of a peaceful problem solving approach conducted by a thirdparty intervener (in the case of prophet himself).”¹⁴

3. **Brotherhood** which was based on the affinity of being human and faith. The former being the rock bottom foundation of Islamic civilization and the latter being the cornerstone.¹⁵ It was the first clear manifestation of the organization of Islamic Ummah. On the basis of a definite ideology and a distinct political philosophy. Till then, the Arabs recognized blood as the only bond that determine their social or community relationship. Sociologically, a people grown and brought up in a tribal system could not behave otherwise. But, the Prophet brought about such a tremendous change in their outlook that affinity of faith replaced by all other types of blood, *Hilf* (association), *Jiwār* (protection) and *Wila* (clientship) which had their roots in tribal traditions of the Arabs. The rock bottom foundation of Islamic civilization is human brotherhood, a brotherhood under which man does not become

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¹² F.R.Faridi, *Living as a Muslim in a multi-cultural society*, Chennai: Islamic Foundation Trust, 1998, p.81

¹³ Parvez A.Bhatt, op.cit., p.82

¹⁴ M.A.Nimer, *Contemporary Islam*, ed., London: Routledge,2006, pp.131-172

¹⁵ Mufiammad Husayn Haykal, *The Life of Mufiammad*, tr. Ismail Ragi al-Faruqi, New Delhi: Crescent PublishingCompany, 2015, p.185

truly human until he has loved for his brother what he loves for himself and implemented this love by deeds of goodness and mercy without weakness or servility.

4. **Social intercourse:** Islam permits the extension of social relations¹⁶ with non- Muslims in proportion to the affinity which they may have with the Qur'ānic moral and spiritual values.¹⁷ Thus it permits marriage with the women who follow some revealed religion (5:6) and have thus affinity with Islam; even it also allows the partaking of their lawful food (5:6). When we look at Islamic history, we can see that the history of Muslim Christian relations dates to the early Islamic period when the Prophet lived. Two events in particular that took place in that time provides us with sufficient information about these relations. The first event that occurred when due to persecution of *Makkans*, some Muslims were obliged to migrate to Abyssinia which was ruled by a Christian king; thus they lived among the Christian community.¹⁸ The second was the meeting of the Prophet with a delegation of Christians from *Najran*¹⁹ and the *Mubahala* (mutual invocation) that occurred between the Prophet and the delegation with regard to issues of Islamic history. This was a significant Christian-Muslim confrontation that included the incident of *Mubahala*, because for the first time the Prophet talked with a Christian group about the personality of the Prophet Isa. After the discussion more than eighty verses of chapter three (3) *Surah 'Al-i Imran*, discuss the Qur'anic discourse on Christianity was revealed. The Prophet involved the delegation of Christians to Islam and to make *Mubahala*, but they did not accept and they offered to make a treaty with the Prophet. In accordance with the treaty, which was based on *Jizya* and other matters, they would remain in their religion in return for fulfilling certain responsibilities. It is pertinent to mention here that it was because of some Christian neighbor's that Prophet's family lighted their kitchen for some time.²⁰ In the first written constitution, which was given by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to the new Islamic state in Madina in 622, was designed eventually to include humanity or other communities as its citizens. The communities which constitute the world Ummah were to exist in peace. Each Ummah is to order the lives of its members according to its own religion. It is to have its own institutions and its own laws, as well as the power to activate the former and implement the latter. Within the world Ummah, everyone should be free to convince and be convinced of the truth. Upon its coming into being, Muslims and Jews were its constituents. Later on, Christians, Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists were added on equal footing.²¹ It included almost all the ethnicities of the world, at least in part and produced one of the greatest civilizations of all times to which everybody contributed and in which every body Participated-Jews,

Christians, Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists by millions. The reasoning of Islam is founded on the repudiation of tribalism and nationalism, for it regards ethnocentrism, whether based on racial, territorial, linguistic or ⁵cultural particularism, as evil and unbecoming of humans created equally by God and endowed by Him with His spirit. Ethnic characterization is demeaning to humanity; every human would rather be identified by thoughts and ideals, or by voluntary deeds and accomplishments, rather than by the circumstances of birth and biological and social formation, which are never of the person's own choosing.²² Prophet's rich legacy as enshrined in the cherished ideals of equality, human brotherhood and social justice was continued with full vigor and zeal under the Orthodox Caliphs (632-661), the Umayyads (651-750) and Abbasids (750-1258), it was for the most part an integral world-mass. It was divided and very wide segments of its reconsolidated under the Mughals (1526-1857), the Ayyubids (1169-1291), the Fatimids (969-1171) Muslim Spain (750-1492) and finally under Ottomans (1300- 1924).²³

Being a primordial religion (*Dīn al-Fiṭrah*), Islam goes around the nature of human beings and Prophet Muhammad finished it well with his enduring legacy as enshrined in the cherished ideals of equality, brotherhood of mankind and social justice in the ennobling concept of human nature in his

¹⁶ See for details, "14th Fiqhi Seminar," on Islamic Fiqh Academy, (India)'s official Website, available inline at:

http://www.ifa.org/english.php?do=homo&pageid=seminar_English14

¹⁷ Dr. Fazlur Rahman Ansari, *Qur'anic Foundation and the Structure of Muslim Society*, New Delhi: KitabBhavan, 2002, pp.252-262

¹⁸ A. H.Siddiqui, *Life of Muhammad*, New Delhi: Adam Publishers, 2015, p.77. see also, M.Husayn Haykal, *The life of Muhammad*, Delhi: Crescent Publishing House, 2015, p.97

¹⁹ Haykal, op.cit, pp.195-199

²⁰ A.R.Momin, *The relevance of Prophet Muhammad's teachings in an insecure, Fragile world*, New Delhi: Institute Of Objective Studies, 2010, p.120

²¹ Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui, *Governance in Islam*, New Delhi: Maxford Books, 2006, p.1

²² AbdulHamid A. Abu Sulayman, *Towards an Islamic theory of International relations: New Direction formethodology and thought*, USA: IIIT, 1993, P.XXXViii

²³ Mahmud Awan, "The faith community and the world order in the perspective of Islam," in I.R.Faruqi, *Triologue of the Abrahamic Faiths*, ed., New Delhi: Qazi Publishers, 2002, p.86

humane vision of tolerance and peaceful co-existence to enrich life for a better tomorrow in the larger interest of mankind.