Chapter Three

Pluralism in Islamic perspective: A Theoretical Formulation
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“No Scripture in the world teaches such a comparative religion as the Qur’an”.

Islam is a religion of complete philosophy of perfect life. It is a complex of culture and the growth around the religious core, a complex with distinctive features in political, social and economic structure, in its conception of law, in ethical outlook, intellectual tendencies, habit of thought and action. It also includes the world of different races, languages, characters and inherited aptitudes, yet found together not only by the link of a common creed, but even more strongly by their participation in a common culture, their obedience to common law, and their adoption to a common tradition.

If this is Islam, Goethe, after reading the Qur’an, exclaimed, then every thinking man among us is, in fact, a Muslim. To Eckermann he said:

“You see, this preaching never fails, with all our systems we cannot go, and generally speaking, no man can go further than that. Islam is not the propagation but the permanency of his religion that deserves our wonder. I believe in one God and Muhammad, the Apostle of God, as Gibbon remarks in his writing about the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the deity has never been degraded by any visible idol.”

G. B. Shaw’s impression about Islam is:

“The only established religion in the world in whose faith and intelligence an educated person could believe—A religion without a Church”.

It is a modest attempt hereby, made to have a theoretical formulation of Islam’s response to Pluralism based on the authoritative versions of Islamic faith. At the top
is Al-Qur’an, the revealed book of Allah to His last Messenger Muhammad (saw) (570-632). Qur’an continues to be held in the highest possible esteem by the adherents of the faith. It is also considered to be the primary source of Islamic law and the moral code for the community to transact its relations within and without. Second to it is Hadith or Sunnah (Traditions and practices of Prophet) who is the embodiment of the ultimate truth. Muslim community is bound to follow him comprehensively in letter and spirit till dooms day. Some of the vital concerns related to coexistence of different communities inhabiting this globe and search for the ways to harness harmony among them, have been addressed here under this part of the study.

The Qur’an revealed by Allah to Prophet Muhammad (saw) in a period of 23 years while his stay at Mecca and Medina, is the primary source of Islam. God has established the relation of Islam to other religions in His revelation. The Qur’an, which is the ultimate religious authority for the Muslims, is the final and definitive revelation of His will, for all space and time and for all mankind. The only kind of contention possible for the Muslim is that of exegetical variations. Muslim religious community believes Islam to be the final version of God’s will, till eternity. That way it cannot be subject to any change i.e. it is immutable, yet Islam possesses the capacity and framework to guide the community in changing space and time. The correct way of knowing the nature of Islam’s response in a varied circumstance would be, to look to authoritative interpretations of the Revealed paradigm only. It is inappropriate to look to the isolated voices here and there on a subject and claim it to be the right opinion of a religious community, which seems to be the practice currently in the enthusiasm of seeing Islam respond in a particular way.
To understand Qur'an correctly, it is essential to know: The exact context of each revelation, which would give background information of the particular verse. The period of each revelation will show development of ideas as time went on. And what the Ummi (unlettered) Bedouin of the desert understood when they heard the text of a particular revelation. This is important because Qur'an was first recited to them and what they understood must be its correct meaning.6

Islam explicitly endorses the universality of God’s revelation, which plays a significant role in the Islamic understanding of other religions. The God of the Qur’an is not only the God of the Muslims but the God of all humankind.7 The Qur’an illustrates this point by stating:

“To Allah belong the East and West and whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah’s Countenance. For Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing” (2:115)

The Qur’an also lays down detailed rules for the regulation of relations between the followers of different religions. It prohibits Muslims from saying anything derogatory about the deities of other religions with regard to religious controversies; it points out the unreasonableness of criticism leveled against a rival creed to which one’s belief and doctrines are also open. It teaches that all great religions are based upon divine revelation and that their deterioration is due to subsequent corruption in human hands. The Holy Qur’an, therefore, prohibits the denunciation of other religions and fully supports inter-religious dialogue aiming to better appreciate each other.8 The Qur’an commands Muslims to “discuss in better manner” and to say:

“Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way. Lo! Thy Lord is best aware of him who strayeth from His way, and He is Best Aware of those who go aright.” (16:125)
"Say (O Muhammad): we believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed unto Moses and Jesus and the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered." (3:84)

Although, the Holy Qur'an does not have any direct guidance which bears similar connotation to the issue under investigation, but when we talk of pluralism we refer, to begin with, to a deeply embedded psychological attitude towards different areas of freedom, equality, Peace, human rights, brotherhood, tolerance, justice, as well as our relation with others.

A. Universal Brotherhood

The religion of Islam puts great emphasis on brotherhood and equality. The brotherhood between the Muslim and equal treatment of non-Muslim are its two basic principles. But one major hurdle in the way of peaceful-coexistence is the false notion of racial superiority. It has already caused a great deal of bloodshed among different human races, but the Qur'an demolished the age-old structure of racial superiority by asserting common origin of all human beings. It recognizes piety and righteousness as the sole basis of nobility and superiority. This concept not only develops in man an optimistic attitude towards life by inspiring him to attain superiority through noble deeds, but also makes possible the realization of the universal brotherhood of mankind. This point is elaborately emphasized in the following verses:

"The believers are naught else than brothers. Therefore make peace between your brethren and observe your duty to Allah that haply ye may obtain mercy." (49:10)
"O mankind! Lo! We have created you Male and Female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct". (39:13)

“Mankind were one community, and Allah sent (unto them) Prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and revealed therewith the Scripture with the truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed. And only those unto whom (the scripture) was given differed concerning it, after clear proofs had come unto them, through hatred one of another. And Allah by His will guided those who believe unto the truth of that concerning which they differed. Allah guideth whom He will unto a straight path.” (2:213)

Islam considers all people of the world as God’s family, in spite of their differences in faith, language and nationality. It recognizes the right of every man to form his own views and to choose his own way of life. No one is permitted to impose his opinion on others by force. Recognizing the human right to freedom of thought, the Qur’an says: “there is no compulsion in religion”. (2:256) So Islam does not allow persecution or discrimination on the ground of religion or color. Muslims are also ordained to cooperate with other peoples in good works and to dissociate themselves from evildoers. The Qur’an exhorts all mankind to try to excel each other in good deeds. (2:148) Since all men are brothers and belong to one family, the service to man has been regarded as a noble work by the prophet of Islam, who says: “All creatures are from the family of God, the most beloved in the sight of God is he who is the most beneficial to His creatures”. He is also quoted as saying: “O God, bear witness that all men are truly brothers”. Thus any system, which divides men into rival groups such as master and slaves and does not recognize people as brothers, is repugnant to Islam and to the noble idea of the universal brotherhood of mankind.
As long as people are conscious of the fact that they belong to God’s family, they will refrain from doing wrong to their fellowmen. But the moment the idea of universal brotherhood disappears from their consciousness, they are no longer able to rise above the limitations that they have imposed on themselves in the name of nationalism, race, language or any erroneous concept of religious dogma. To satisfy their vanity they allow themselves to dominate and to exploit their own fellowmen. Consequently, they themselves destroy peace. Indeed it is the misfortune of nations that they have been divided into rival groups. Anyhow, the idea of brotherhood requires that more than anything else hatred and ill-will towards others should come to an end. Peace with God, whose name is also The Peace (al-Salaam), can alone cure such inward diseases. At the same time, man in his social life should cease to live at the cost of his fellowmen, because man cannot enjoy divine bliss while he refuses to serve His family. Through their sincerity, humility and good example, Muslims can play an important role in the world and fulfill the divine will. Needless to say that the religious and moral duty of the Muslim nations is to be in the forefront against war, because to work for peace (ifsha' al-salaam) is one of those orders given by the Prophet to his followers. Small nations can do so by first putting their own house in order (charity begins at home) in accordance with the concept of the brotherhood of man. It may be noted that noble ends can be achieved only through noble means. Military pacts and arms race will never secure peace. On the contrary, they are doomed to failure.

The Qur'an is replete with provisions, which enjoin peaceful coexistence with other religions. In the very outset, it stresses the principle that there is no compulsion in religion. All the prophets of God who delivered His (Allah’s) message to the Humanity before Muhammad (saw) are recognized and accorded respect; and were not discriminated. According to the Qur’an, all people were created from the same source and are inherently well disposed and equal. Allah says;
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"Men have fear for your Lord, who created you from a single soul. From that soul He created its mate, and through them He bestowed the earth with countless men and women." (4:1)

"And We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob, each of them We guided; and Noah did We guide aforetime; and of his seed (We guided) David, Soloman, and Job, Joseph, and Moses and Aaron. Thus do We regard them good. And Zakariah and John and Jesus and Elias. Each one (of them) was of righteous; And Ismael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot. Each one of them did We prefer above (our) creation". (6:85,86,87)

"O ye who believe! Believe in Allah and His messenger and the Scripture which He hath revealed unto His Messenger, and the Scripture which he revealed aforetime. Whoso disbelieveth in Allah and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers and the Last Day, he verily hath wandered far astray." (4:136)

The Qur'an is not only stressing the equality of mankind but also that mankind is one community. It recognizes the division into countries, nations, tribes, religions and traditions but explains that it is only for the purpose of identification. It denounces all discriminations based on racial, economic or other fancied superiority. The Qur’an further stresses that peace is an essentiality and war is an eventuality. Human being is the main addressee of Islam- no matter he is a rich man of a city, or a poor dweller of a desert; a man or a woman.17

"Say (unto the People of the Scriptures): Dispute ye with us concerning Allah when he is our Lord and your Lord? Ours are ours works and yours yours works. We look to Him alone." (2:139)
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In a related Hadith Prophet Muhammad (saw) has said: “You cannot enter Paradise until you truly believe in God and you will not attain true faith until you have love for one another. Shall I tell you something that generates love if you do? Spread the greetings of peace among yourselves”.

B. Diversity, Tolerance and Justice;

The Qur’an teaches that Allah deliberately created a world of diversity. Multiplicity of races, colors, communities and religions as the signs of His Mercy and Glory exhibited through His creatures, and rather appears to be implying that, diversity is part of divine intent and purpose of creation; The Qur’an states;

O mankind! Lo! We have created you Male and Female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct”. (49:13)

But what Islam aims to do is to integrate such diversity into unity through the sacred principles of the Qur’an: it explains the reason and purpose for such racial and religious multiplicity, God created such religious, racial and other forms of diversity in order to distinguish those who can appreciate the majesty of God and see His purpose from those who ignore the signs of God as such otherwise God could have created only one nation.18

“And if thy Lord had willed, He verily would have made mankind one nation, yet they cease not differing.” (11:118)

“Let the people of the Gospel judge by that which Allah hath revealed therein. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed, such are evil-livers. And unto thee have We revealed the Scripture with the truth, confirming whatever Scripture was before it, and watcher over it. So judge between them
by that which Allah hath revealed, and follow not their desires away from the truth which hath come unto thee. For each We have appointed a divine law and a traced-out way. Had Allah willed He could have made you one community? But that he may try you by (He hath made you as ye are). So vie one with another in good works. Unto Allah ye will all return, and He will then inform you of that wherein ye differ.” (5:48)

The God of all humankind did not leave any nation in the dark; rather He illuminated them by sending messengers. Although God sent a messenger to every nation, He did not mention all of them in the Quran. Therefore, Muslims receive a Qur’anic sanction which enables them to expand an Islamic account of prophecy in such a manner that it could include those messengers who are not mentioned in the Qur’an.

“And messengers We have mentioned unto thee before and messengers We have not mentioned unto thee; and Allah spake directly unto Moses.” (4:164)

“Verily We sent messengers before thee, among them those of whom we have told thee, and some of whom We have not told thee; and it was not given any messenger that he should bring a portent save by Allah’s leave, but when Allah’s commandment cometh (the cause) is judged aright, and the followers of vanity will then be lost.” (40:78)

“And for every nation there is a Messenger, And when their messenger cometh (on the Day of Judgment) it will be judged between them fairly, and they will not be wronged.” (10:47)

“Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ismael and Isaac and Jacob (asw) and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which was
given to the prophets from their lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him do we surrender”. (2:136)

“He It is Who created you, but one of you is a disbeliever and one of you is a believer: And Allah is seer of what ye do”, (64:2)

“And we never sent a messenger save with the language of his folk that he might make (the message) clear for them, then Allah sendeth whom He will astray, and guideth whom He will. He is the mighty, the wise. (14:4)

“And verily we have raised in every nation a messenger, (proclaiming): serve Allah and shun false gods. Then some of them (there were) whom Allah guided and some of them (there were) upon whom error had just hold. Do but travel in the land and see the nature of the consequence for the deniers” (16:36)

“Lo! We have sent thee with the Truth, a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner; and there is not a nation but a Warner hath passed among them”. (35:24)

The Prophet Muhammad (saw) has added in a famous narration that 124000 Prophets have been sent to mankind throughout history. Not only must Muslims believe in these Prophets, but also in the Scriptures that accompanied some of them, in their original forms, such as the Scrolls of David, the Torah of Moses and the Injil of Jesus (asw).²⁰

Islam not only accepts the truth of all revealed religions and the divine mission of all the prophets of the world, wherever and in whatever age they may have made their appearance, but also requires the Muslims to believe in them without making any distinction among them. The belief in the revealed scriptures of all peoples and in all the Prophets of the world is a fundamental article of Islamic faith.
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The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. Each one believeth in Allah, His angels, His Scriptures, and His Messengers. We make no distinction between any of His messengers. And they say: We hear, and we obey: (Grant us) Thy forgiveness, our Lord. Unto thee is the journeying.” (2:285)

“Muhammad is but a Messenger, messengers (the like of whom) have passed away before him. Will it be that, when he dieth or is slain, ye will turn back on your heels? He who turneth back doth no hurt to Allah, and Allah will reward the thankful.” (3:14)

Although all the messengers spoke about the same reality and conveyed the same truth, the messages they delivered were not identical in their theological forms. That is simply because the message was expressed in the specific forms which should accord and make sense for the culture it was sent to. Thus a messenger is to speak within the cultural context of the community to which the message is revealed. 21

The implication of seeing history as a ground upon which the heavenly messages are displayed is that all religions in one way or another are related and therefore share a common purpose. Islam in this respect is the name of the latest version of the message, which has been displayed throughout the history. That is to say, one heavenly religion cannot be a rival but an ally of another heavenly religion. Therefore, in Islam the notion of the universality of God’s revelation has always played a key role in constituting an Islamic theology of religions. Hence as a result of adopting such a belief, Muslims are able to participate in the essence of the religious proximity of other traditions. 22

One of the prime tasks of Islam is to eliminate discrimination based upon race or colour by proposing a single Islamic brotherhood, which aims to unite all the
different people under one faith. It has partly achieved this during its history. Beyond this Islam even managed to establish a unity among all the subjects including the Christians and Jews that it governed.23

The Qur’an speaks about the basic dignity of all human beings. The prophet (saw) spoke about the equality of all human beings, regardless of their race, color, language or ethnic background. The Shariah recognizes the rights of all people to life, property, family, honor and conscience.

Islam while recognizing the inner and essential unity of the universe and of Humanity does not lose sight of the outward diversity of the Phenomenon of Nature and the variety of manners and customs, ideas and beliefs, languages and colours characterizing different people. The Qur’an calls attention to this variety and regards it as a sign of creative power of God.24 It says: -

“And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colours. Lo! Herein indeed are portents for men of knowledge.” (30:22)

Islam extends the horizons of its believers by emphasizing upon the need for the appreciation of diversity in most of the human domains vis language, yet does not approve of polytheism or polytheistic modes of worship and outlook. Nevertheless, it makes clear to the believers that there is a difference between Din and Shariah, while Din as propounded by Allah’s truthful messengers irrespective of time and space was one, the same does not hold true for different Sharayah sent by Allah through His messengers to different peoples. Here Muslims while accepting and obeying Din and Shariah brought by Prophet Muhammad (saw) do appreciate to different Sharayah by earlier Prophets.
Islam emphasizes the establishment of equality and justice; both of these values are hard to be established without some degree of tolerance. Islam from the very beginning recognized the principle of freedom of belief or matters of faith and belief. The ethics of tolerance is a consistent feature of the Holy Qur’an throughout its Makkan and Madinian periods of revelation. Literally the word “tolerance” means “to gear.” As a concept it means to respect, accept and appreciate the rich diversity of world’s cultures, forms of expression and ways of being human. It means that one is free to adhere to one’s own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behavior and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are. It also means that one’s views are not to be imposed on others.

Tolerance comes from our recognition of the dignity of the human beings, The basic equality of all human beings, Universal human rights, Fundamental freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Islam may tolerate anything, but it teaches zero tolerance for injustice, oppression, and violation of the rights of other human beings. Allah says:

“What should ye not fight for the cause of Allah and of the feeble among men and of the women and the children who are crying: our Lord? Brings us forth from out this town of which the people are oppressors! Oh, given us from thy presence some protecting friends! Oh, give us from Thy presence some defender!” (4:75)

Islam teaches tolerance on all levels: individual, group and state. It should be a political and legal requirement. Tolerance is the responsibility that upholds human rights, coexistence, and the rule of law. The concept of rububiyyah as developed by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has bearing on the unity of humankind too. Allah sustains everyone, even misguided ones. One should not discriminate between human
beings on the basis of one's belief. It is against the divine function of rububiyah. The Sufis go even further; they maintain that even one who does not believe in God should not be discriminated against. There is a story from the Sufi lore about the Prophet Ibrahim (asw) who did not eat without a guest. Once it so happened that no guest came for three days Prophet Ibrahim (asw) suffered pangs of hunger but did not eat without a guest. When pangs of hunger became unbearable he went out in search of a guest he found an aged person sitting alone. Ibrahim (asw) invited him to dine with him. On the way home prophet asked the old man. While conversing with him, Ibrahim (asw) came to know that he is an atheist. Prophet Ibrahim (asw) was enraged on learning about his atheism. On this the divine voice told him “Oh Ibrahim (asw) you could not tolerate this old man for three minutes whom I tolerated for seventy years!”

The lesson is that one should be patient and tolerant and if necessary, dialogue with the person with wisdom to make him aware of his erroneous views while respecting his integrity as a person.25

The Qur'an says very clearly:

“Unto each nation have We given sacred rites which they are to perform; so let them not dispute with thee of the matter, but summon thou unto followest right guidance. And if they wrangle with thee, say: Allah is best aware of what ye do.” (22:67-69)

“Unto you your religion and unto me my religion.” (109:6)

“And if thy Lord willed, all who are in the earth would have believed together. Wouldst thou (Muhammad) compel men until they are believers?” (10:99)
“Had Allah willed, they had not been idolatrous. We have not set thee as a keeper over them, nor art thou responsible for them. Revile not those unto whom they pray besides Allah lest they wrongfully revile Allah through ignorance… (6:108)

As a sequel, one has to recognize the idea of justice as the divine virtue, which alone has the right to reign supreme in society. The absence of justice is, in fact, the absence of state or government. Human society cannot be true to its name unless justice rules it. “With Justice”, as a Muslim theologian says, “the heavens and the earth are preserved and, for it, the Prophets and Messengers- blessing of God be upon them-have been sent” To explain the significance and importance of justice, the Qur’an has made several statements to the effect that prophets have been ordered to establish justice among people in accordance with divine revelation and that they should not let low desires influence their judgment. Furthermore, nation after nation have been brought to utter destruction because from wrong. Consequently, they perished and not a single trace did they leave behind.

“O ye who believe! Be ye staunch in justice, witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or (your) parents or (your) kindred, whether (the case be of) a rich man or a poor man, for Allah is nearer unto both (than ye are). So follow not passion lest ye lapse (from truth) and if ye lapse or fall away, then lo! Allah is ever informed of what ye do.” (4:135)

In the last Hajj sermon Prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

“… hurt no one so that no one may heart you….you know that every Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. You are all equal. Nobody has superiority over other except by piety and good actions....” (4:2)
Conversion through coercion is strictly forbidden in Islam. The Qur'an categorically lays down that there is no compulsion in religion. The Prophet's duty is only to preach or to invite people to Islam. There his duty ends. He is not concerned whether people accept his teachings or not. This is one of the unique principles of the Qur'an, which was initiated in order to regulate freedom of religious belief in Islam. The Qur'an reads:

"There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who rejecteth false deities and believeth in Allah hath grasped a firm handhold which will never break. Allah is Hearer, Knower." (2:256)

"Say: (it is) the truth from the Lord of your (all). Then who so ever will let him believe, and whosoever will, let him disbelieve..." (18:29)

"The guiding of them is not thy duty (O Muhammad), but Allah guideth whom He will..." (2:272)

Many commentators cite some events in which the prophet himself implemented the requirements of verse 2:256 and prohibited his companions to compel people to accept Islam. For instance Tabari mentions that when the two Jewish tribes of Qaynuqa and Nadr were expelled from Medina, they had in their charge children of the Ansar who had been placed with Jewish families. The biological parents asked the prophets permission to take their children back and raise them as Muslims. But the prophet said; there is no compulsion in religion; Tabari mentions another event, which indicates how this verse worked in practice. A Muslim named Al-Husayn had two sons, who had been influenced by Christian merchants, converted to Christianity and left Medina to go to Syria with these missionary merchants. Al-Husayn pleaded with the prophet to pursue the convoy and bring his sons back to Islam. But the
prophet once again said, *there is no compulsion in religion*, that is let them follow the religion of their choice, even though it is not Islam.\(^ {28} \)

This verse itself has functioned as a law by safeguarding the freedom of religious belief throughout Islamic history.\(^ {29} \) It was such Qur’anic injunctions, which have provided a rationale for the religious tolerance that has characterized Islamic history. As Lewis points out, religious persecution of the members of other faiths was almost absent; Jews and Christians under Muslim rule were not subject to exile, death, which was the choice, offered to Muslims and Jews in reconquered Spain. And also, Christians and Jews were not subject to any major territorial and occupational restrictions such as, the common lot of Jews in pre-modern Europe.\(^ {30} \) In its history, Islam did not have missionary societies or any missionary institution. The work of *da’wa* is always left to an individual effort.

“Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way. Lo! Thy Lord is best aware of him who strayeth from His way and He is Best Aware of those who go aright.” (16:125)

“Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and beware! if ye turn away, then know that the duty of our Messenger is only plain conveyance (of the message)”. (5:92)

“Say: Obey Allah and obey the Messenger. But if ye turn away, then (it is) for him (to do) only that wherewith he hath been charged, and for you (to do) only that wherewith ye have been charged. If ye obey him, ye will go aright. But the messenger hath no other charge than to convey (the message) plainly.” (24:54)
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Allah punished the people of Prophet Nuh, the Aad, the Thamud, the people of Prophet Lut, the people of Prophet Shuaib and Pharoah and his followers, because they had become oppressors and committed aggression against the righteous, and stopped others to come to the way of Allah. A great Islamic scholar Alama Ibn Taymiyah has said, “the states may live long in spite of their people’s unbelief (kufr), but they cannot live long if its people become oppressors”.

Qur’an commands Muslims to do Jihad in the way of Allah, but the purpose of Jihad is not to convert people to Islam. Allah says “there is no compulsion in religion.” The real purpose of jihad is to remove injustice and aggression only. It says:

“O ye who believe! Be ye staunch in justice, witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or (your) parents or (your) kindred, whether (the case be of) a rich man or a poor man, for Allah is nearer unto both (than ye are). So follow not passion lest ye lapse (from truth) and if ye lapse or fall away, then lo! Allah is ever informed of what ye do.” (4:135)

“Allah forbiddeth you not those who warred not against you on account of religion and drove you not out from your homes, that ye should show them kindness and deal justly with them. Lo! Allah loveth the just dealers.” (60:8)

“Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin with not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors.” (2:190)

“And argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is better, save with such of them as do wrong, and say: we believe in that which hath been revealed unto us and revealed unto you; our God and your God is one, and unto Him we surrender.” (29:46)

On the diversity of faith, Said Nursi states:
When you know your way and opinions to be true, you have the right to say, “My way is right and the best,” But you do not have the right to say, “only my way is right.” According to the sense of “The eye of contentment is too dim to perceive faults; it is the eye of anger that exhibits all vice”; your unjust view and distorted opinion cannot be the all-decisive judge and cannot condemn the belief of another as invalid.31

The Holy Qur’an holds a special kinship with the people of the book, as it makes it clear that all the people have received messengers from God, so Muslims have taken great care in dealing with people of other faiths and religions in different locations of the world. About Christians and Jews Qur’an has made explicitly clear that they are “the People of the book”. About the Magians (Zorastrians) and Hindus with whom Muslims encountered when Islam spread to Iran and India, Muslim theologians, on learning that these communities have earlier received divine revelations classified them as “Mithli Ahl-I Kitab” (like or synonymous Ahl-I Kitab). Thereby extending the domain of special kinship with the major religious communities of the world.

“It will not be in accordance with your desires, nor the desires of the People of the Scripture. He who doeth wrong will have the recompense thereof, and will not find against Allah any protecting friend or helper.” (4:123)

There are certain elements in the core religious belief system of Islam, which makes a believer necessarily affirm the fact that Allah, the Creator and the Sustainer of humans had been sending His messengers and guides to all the nations of the world. As evinced by the Qur’an itself in verse (16:36). Another element of the core belief system of Islam is a firm belief and recognition of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Yaqoob, Yusuf, Moses and Jesus as the truthful Messengers of God. If any body affirms his faith in Prophet Muhammad (saw) but refuses to accept any of the Messengers mentioned by God in the pale of Islam. This is one of the unique features of Islam
that it asks its believers and adherents to have full faith and belief in the Messengers, who remain the focal point of other religions.

This position of Islam is the orthodox position, no interpreter, or reformer has introduced these elements in the core belief system. Likewise no reformer or interpreter or hardliner can change the status of these elements of belief, which definitely widen the horizon of the believer in Islam and create in him a sense of oneness and fraternity with the adherents of revealed religions.

C. Human rights

Human rights are considered to be central and inalienable, a sort of categorical imperative for the promotion of the dignity and equality of man. They are seen as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. Human rights are political, civil, economic, social, legal, religious and cultural rights guaranteed by the international Bill of Rights and other international instruments concluded within and outside the United Nations system and governmental and Non-governmental organizations. Including the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the international Covenant on Civil and Political Rights among a host of others, which are too many to be enumerated here.

*Harold Laski* offers a useful definition of Human rights;

> Those conditions of social life without which no man can seek, in general, to be himself at his best... for since the state exists to make possible that achievement, it is only by maintaining rights that its end may be secured.

On the other hand Charles Humana views it as;

> Laws and practices that have evolved over the centuries to protect ordinary people, minorities, groups and races; from oppressive rulers and governments.
The western reference point for the human rights consciousness goes back to Magna Carta of Britain. The western world equates medieval periods with barbarism. This may be true for the western man's experiences in this part of the world, but does not stand the test of its universal application. It is right in the beginning of the seventh 7th century that Islam laid down clear directives for inter human relationships in all its forms whether in peace or in war. The Charter of Medina is a clear testimony to this fact, where Prophet Muhammad (saw) proclaims:

- Whosoever among the Jews follows us shall have help and equality; they shall not be injured nor shall any enemy be aided against them.
- The Jews are one Ummah (people, nation, community) with the Muslims. The Jews shall maintain their own religion and the Muslims theirs. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. The close friends of the Jews are as themselves.
- The Jews shall be responsible for their expenses and the Believers for theirs. Each if attacked shall come to the assistance of the other.
- The valley of Yathrib shall be sacred and inviolable for all that join this treaty. Strangers under protection shall be treated on the same ground as their protectors; but no stranger shall be taken under protection except with the consent of his tribe. No woman shall be taken under protection without the consent of her family.
- The contracting parties are bound to help one another against any attack on Yathrib. If they are called to cease hostilities and to enter into peace, they shall be bound to do so in the interest of peace; and they make a similar demand on Muslims it must be carried out except when the war is against their religion.
- Allah approves the truth and good will of this covenant. This treaty shall not protect the unjust and the criminal.
The Holy Qur'an with regard to this fact says:

"It is He who has made the earth manageable for you, so traverse ye through its tracts and enjoy of the sustenance which He furnishes: but unto Him is the Resurrection". (67:15)

The above ayah form the Qur'an shows evidence of the human rights enjoined by Islam as contained in Islamic Law, the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Islam as a religion, a way of life, a social order, a system of economic rules and government, has laid down some universal fundamental rights for humanity as a whole. Human rights in Islam mean the rights granted by Allah and, therefore, no legislative, executive or judicial arm of any state or government has the authority to alter or abrogate such rights or to refuse to enforce them.

The maintenance, protection, acceptance, recognition and enforcement of human rights are part and parcel of the Islamic way of life. Islam does not restrict human rights to the geographical limits of an 'Islamic State'. As a matter of fact, Allah has warned that anybody, state, government or institution, which denies, violates, alters or fails to enforce the rights guaranteed by Allah will be regarded as disbeliever.36

"If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) unbelievers". (5:4)

Islam is not only a religion but it is also a way of life, a system of ethics, a philosophy of life and a code for community life and individual conduct. As a way of life, Islam organizes all the aspects of life on the scale of the individual and the nation. Islam clearly established man’s duties, and rights in all relationships—a clear system of worship, civil rights, laws of marriage and divorce, inheritance, codes of behavior, government, laws of war and peace, of buying and selling and laws of
relationship and co-existence with one another – parents, children, relatives, neighbors, Muslims and non-Muslims.37

1. Right to Life:
The sanctity of human life is protected as the most fundamental principle of any civilized community, by numerous Qur’anic ayahs and Prophetic sayings. For instance Allah says in the Qur’an:

“...If anyone slays a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if anyone saves a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people...” (5:32)

“Kill not your children...nor take life–which Allah has made sacred...” (17:31-33)

In the same vein, one of the most concise textual authorities for respecting individual rights to life, ownership and freedom is documented in a prophetic saying thus:

Three things of a Muslim are prohibited for another Muslim: his blood, his property and his reputation.” 38

In the address, which the Prophet delivered on the occasion of the Farewell Hajj, he said:

Your lives and properties are forbidden to one another till you meet your Lord on the Day of Resurrection. 39

About the Dhimmis (the non-Muslim citizens of the Muslim state) Prophet (saw) has said:
“One who kills a man under covenant (i.e. Dhimmi) will not even smell the fragrance of Paradise”.\(^{40}\)

2. **Right to religion and conscience.**

Islam has given the right to the individual that his religious sentiments and conscience will be accorded due respect and nothing will be done or said to violate, infringe or encroach upon his right to religious sentiments, conscience and conviction.\(^{41}\)

Since relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is based on peace and Muslims are ordained to help each other in piety and good deeds, as we have seen, it is not difficult to comprehend the rights of non-Muslims in a society in which they share a common destiny with Muslims. Both Muslims and non-Muslims have a right to an equal opportunity for an honorable life in a country where both have decided to form a Government for their social affairs. True, in the early days of Islam, the Muslim polity was not familiar with the concept of separation between Church and State, but this does not mean that Islam has the right to flourish at the cost of other faiths or it seeks state’s protection for its existence. On the contrary, Islam recognizes freedom of thought and expression for every person. It is part of Islamic faith that religion is a personal affair between man and God and that no body has a right to impose his religion on others.\(^{42}\) Allah says in the Qur’an:

> “Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error; whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah, hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things. (2:256)"

So the Islamic state is not a religious state in the sense in which we understand the expression in the Western political terminology. It is bound by its nature to grant complete freedom of religious life. This is the reason that the problem of religious
freedom never raised its head in Islam; because Islam considers persecution, regardless of its forms, a crime worse than killing. As we have already seen, defend themselves against their oppressors, otherwise the freedom of religious life in the churches, and monasteries, synagogues and mosques, as the Qur’an says, would have been destroyed.\textsuperscript{43}

"Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said: Our Lord for Allah’s repelling some men by means of others, cloisters and churches and oratories and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft mentioned, would assuredly have been pulled down. Verily Allah helpeth one who helpeth Him. Lo! Allah is Strong, Almighty. (22:40)

The Qur’anic statements with regard to freedom of religious life were confirmed by the Prophet of Islam who made several agreements with Jews and Christians in which each party was assured freedom of thought and religious practice.

3. Right relating to Social and Economic status.
Islam places the obligation upon the government and the community to provide for the minimum needs of those who cannot do so themselves on account of some incapacity. Allah says:

“And in their wealth the beggar and the outcast had due share.” (51:19)

These needs, in so far as possible, must include, ensuring that every individual has a dwelling, and appropriate education and the possibility of founding a family. The ultimate aim of satisfying all these needs is to enable each individual to participate, in so far as possible, in the conduct of the affairs of the community.\textsuperscript{44}
4. Equality of Individuals before God.

Islam gives human beings the right to absolute and complete equality in the eyes of the law. Human rights in Islam are based on the absolute equality of all individuals before God. Fundamental equality implies equal legal and moral responsibility for all. Islam imposes equality of opportunity between people. It combats class distinctions and ignores birth privilege. Prophet Muhammad in his ‘farewell pilgrimage’ said that:

“People are all as equal, just as the teeth of a single comb.”

The pillars of Islam teach equality among a host of other teachings. There is equality in the way Muslims pray, in the way they fast and in the way Muslims perform Hajj rites, to mention just a few.

To prove that in Islam, nobody is above the law, the following story can be briefly recounted: one day, a women belonging to a high and noble family, Fatimah al-Makhzumiyyah, was arrested in connection with an offence of theft that made her deserve amputation. The case was brought to the Prophet and Usamah was sent to him to plead on the women’s behalf with the recommendation that she be spared the punishment of theft. The Prophet replied:

“The nations that lived before you were destroyed by God because they punished the common man for their offences and let their dignitaries go unpunished for their crimes: I swear by Him who holds my life in His hand, that even if Fatimah the daughter of Muhammad had committed this crime, I would have amputated her hand.”
5. Right to Justice.

It must be stressed that human rights are not recognized only in principle in Islam, they are also accompanied by a system of legal and administrative rules designed to ensure their application, and that system in turn constitutes a fundamental right, in the absence of which all other rights would be in danger of becoming a dead letter.

The application of a right implies that any violation of that right should be brought before judge whose competence and integrity are beyond question. The Qur’an provides clear instructions on the matter:

"O ye who believe! Be ye staunch in justice, witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or (your) parents or (your) kindred, whether (the case be of) a rich man or a poor man, for Allah is nearer unto both (than ye are). So follow not passion lest ye lapse (from truth) and if ye lapse or fall away, then lo! Allah is ever informed of what ye do." (4:135)

Prophet Muhammad (saw) has said:

He who knows the truth but violates it in his judgments shall go to Hell. He who judges without knowing the truth shall go to Hell. Only He who knows the truth and judges according to that truth shall go to Heaven.

6. Duties and Obligations.

It is pertinent to mention that Allah does not emphasize human rights alone, but emphasizes on reciprocal duties and obligations also. These duties and obligations include obedience to laws, defense of the country, national service, payment of tax and other levies, among a host of others, Qur’an 5:1, 2:132, 4:64, 66:80-81, 5:95, 14:12, 8:20-25, 24:51-52, and 54 are full of injunctions, exhortations and admonitions on obedience to God, the Prophet and constituted authority.
Although obedience to legitimate authority is qualified and conditional, the Shariah attaches great importance to the fulfillment of the Muslim’s obligations toward their legitimate government and considers it a religious obligation of the highest degree.\textsuperscript{51} Prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

He who withdraws his hand from obedience (to the amir) will have nothing in his favor when he meets Allah on the Day of Resurrection and he who dies without having considered himself bound by a pledge of allegiance (literary, while there is no pledge of allegiance on his neck) had died the death of the time of ignorance (i.e. as an unbeliever).\textsuperscript{52}

The Islamic provisions for the protection of human rights contain many things that are not provided for in other international charters or declarations of human rights. For instance, Islam enjoins that the rights of individuals must be protected, observed and respected under all circumstances whether such individuals are citizens of an Islamic state or not. These rights are supported in Islam with all the Qur’anic injunctions, Shariah, Sunnah, Hadith, and a lot of other measures and legislations that are needed to ensure their protection and implementation. Neither the provisions for the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights nor those of the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights among a host of others have gone as far as the Islamic provisions. These international documents have remained as moral recommendations not guaranteed by any legal safeguards whether on the international level or in the domestic arena.

In addition to all the types of human rights enumerated in the preceding discourse, it is pertinent to note that Islam is totally against oppression, intimidation and injustice.\textsuperscript{53} According to Khalifah Umar: \textit{A man is not secure in his person when he is starved, degraded or imprisoned to make confession against himself.}\textsuperscript{54} Also, the
Prophet Muhammad (saw) is quoted as saying: "My community is exonerated in three matters: error, forgetfulness and that into which it has been coerced." 55

It is part of the protection of human rights in Islam that women, children, old people, the sick and the wounded must not be oppressed. The needy, the destitute and the hungry must be fed, the naked must be clothed, the wounded or the diseased must be treated medically irrespective of whether they belong to the Islamic community or not. Islam tries to achieve the enforcement of these human rights by many means including the provisions of certain legal safeguards and the invitation of mankind to transcend the lower level of animal life to be able to go beyond the mere ties fostered by the kinship of blood, racial superiority, linguistic arrogance, and economic privileges, Islam invites mankind to move on to a plane of existence where, by reason of his inner excellence, man can realize the ideal of the brotherhood and humanity of man to man.56 The Prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

He is not a believer who eats his full when his neighbor beside him is hungry.57

He does not believe, whose neighbors are not safe from his injurious conduct.58

None of you (truly) believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.59

D. Islam and the Other Faiths.

Every revealed religion can be named as Islam when it is seen as a state of submission to God (Literally Islam).60 Islam is by no means a new message. It is the restatement of what has always been true. Islam, as the Qur’an says, is the Divine Message taught by all Prophets of the world of whom Prophet Muhammad (saw) was the last. Since the truth is one, the word God, therefore, does not differ because of the difference of languages. Hence a Muslim believes in all prophets because the denial
of any of them is the denial of the truth. Islam, therefore, is hostile to no one. This is the reason why the Qur’an recognizes the sanctity of all houses of God, regardless of their names; churches, Temples or Mosques.  

“Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly because they said: our lord is Allah—for had it not been fro Allah’s, Cloisters and Churches and Oratories and Mosques where in the name of Allah is oft mentioned, would assuredly have been pulled down. Verily Allah helpeth one who helpeth Him, Lo! Allah is strong, Almighty. (22:40)

The Qur’an asserts that mankind today can find Islam in its purest form in the Qur’an and that people are free in their choice. But they should be sincere to their own faiths if they do not respond to the call of Islam. Furthermore, Islam invites the adherents of other religions to work together for the glory of God. This very call shows the significance of the Islamic attitude towards unity of religions for a noble cause.  

“So set they purpose (O Muhammad) for religion as a man by nature upright-the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He hath created man. There is no altering (the Jews of) Allah’s creation. That is the right religion, but most men know not-.” (30:30)

“Do not dispute with the followers of the Book except by what is best and except those of them who act unjustly, and say; we believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you; and our God and your God is one and to Him do we submit”’. (19:46)

Expanding the term Islam in a manner that could envelope all other revealed religions is not something produced in order to counter the quest for a pluralistic approach. It is a Qur’anic endeavor, which aims to show all revelations as the part
and parcel of God’s Plan. Muslims believe that Islam is the name of the basic mission of all prophets throughout history. Hasan Askari illustrates the point.

Islam now was the quality of all those, irrespective of the religions the practices, who are humble before God’s transcendence and submit to Him as their Creator and Lord. While Muslims judged others, they came under their own judgment, for now the word Muslim could be extended to any point in the past and any point in the future. This was the revolution which the Qur’an introduced into the religious history of humanity, and as such a universal revolution: now a Noah an Abraham, a Moses, a Jesus, a Muhammad (saw) are all ‘Muslims’…. (Whoever among Jews and Christians and the people of other religions, surrenders to God, the one and only God, and does not explicitly and implicitly associate gods (race, religion and any other signs and ‘manifestations’ of) with God, is a ‘Muslim’. The Qur’an promotes such notion by stating:

“Our Lord! And make us submissive unto Thee and of our seed a nation submissive unto Thee, and show us our ways of worship, and relent toward us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Relenting, the Merciful.” (2:128)

“Lo! those who be believe (this revelation), and those who are Jews, and the Sabean and the Christians and the Magians and the idolaters—Lo! Allah will decide between them on the day of Resurrection. Lo! Allah is Witness over all things.” (22:17)

According to the Qur’an, Islam is not only a name given to a system of faith or religion but it is also a name of an act of surrendering to the Will of God. Any thing, which bows to God’s Will voluntarily or even involuntarily, is qualified as Muslim.
Only human beings who have the freedom of faith can go against God’s Will and reject Islam, while all other creatures affirm it.65

Islam did not originate with Muhammad (saw). The religion of Abraham, the doyen of Prophets was Islam. In fact Islam was the religion of all the prophets who came before Muhammad (saw). It could not be otherwise because God raised the prophets and, therefore, their religion also must be one and the same. Muhammad (saw) only completed it and gave it its all-embracing role. Other religions were also divine but they got adulterated and strayed from their original path, it is to bring back all these religions to the real path of God, which is what Muhammad (saw), did. Islam, therefore, is a federation of all religions. Muhammad (saw) brought the Qur’an to correct all deviations (2:106, 2:59).

“He hath ordained for you that religion which He commended unto Noah, and that which We inspire in thee (Muhammad), and that which We commended unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying establish the religion, and be not divided therein. Dreadful for the idolaters is that unto which thou callest them. Allah chooseth for Himself whom He will, and guideth unto Himself him who turneth (toward Him).” (17:13, 42:13)

Prophet Muhammad (saw) said: “We, the group of Prophets, our religion is unique.” (Hadith)

Thus the Qur’an is telling us what din precisely is, this declaration calls for our close attention. Let us notice that the word used in the verse is din. Din does not include Shariah, which is a code of conduct. There is no word for din in the English language; nor is their any distinction in Christian thought between din and Shariah. The Qur’an speaks of din and says that one and the only din was given to all the prophets named in the verse. But we know that the Shariah given to each of the
prophets was different. Eminent Muslim Scholars like Shah Wali Allah and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad have explained that the din of Islam has been constant but the codes of conduct which were prescribed for the followers of various prophets of God differed from one another, owing to the wonderfully realistic reason that the codes were meant to suit the stages of cultural progress made by man in the courses of history and found existing during the prophecy of each Prophet. Since the codes were different from one another it follows that they were not a part of the din of Islam. Only the common factor found in the preaching of the prophets were the din.66

“He hath ordained for you that religion which He commended unto Noah, and that which We inspire in thee (Muhammad), and that which We commended unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying: Establish the religion, and be not divided therein. Dreadful for the idolater is that unto which thou callest them. Allah chooseth for Himself whom He will, and guideth unto Himself him who turneth (toward Him).” (42:13)

“Abraham was not a Jew, nor yet a Christian; but he was an upright man, who had surrendered (to Allah), and he was not of the idolaters.” (3:66)

Islamic teachings exhort Muslims for being kind, tolerant and accommodative to others living besides them. The differences are due to the influence of historical, geographical and ethnological factors and traditions working in the minds of different peoples. Birth and environment determine many vital points in life. We generally inherit our beliefs and practices from our parents and early training in life. We do never question and examine them and compare them with those of others and judge for themselves their merits and defects? Generally speaking we are Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians, Hindus or Buddhists because our parents were so. The Holy Prophet said:
"Every child is born with a disposition to the natural religion; it is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian". 67

Even among people of the same religion there arises difference of interpretation of the texts and understanding of their meaning which splits them up into sects. Then again among individuals following the same religion the grasping of the spirit of it’s teaching varies according to the degrees of their intelligence. The Prophet was conscious of this difference when he said:

"My followers will be split up into 73 sects".

"The difference of opinion among my followers is a favour (of God)."

Islam takes for granted that people following religions other than Islam, exist without being challenged even if they live side by side with Muslims. With regard to the relationship of Muslim and non-Muslim we must refer to the history of Islam when Prophet Muhammad (saw) had to face virulent opposition from the Meccans right from the beginning of the proclamation of his mission. He was ridiculed, insulted, ill-treated, and put to untold hardships, and his followers were subjected to the bitterest persecution, two of whom died under the tortures to which they were subjected. This inhuman treatment at the hands of the Quraysh led to the emigration of a number of Muslim men and women to the neighboring Christian country of Abyssinia. The Quraysh swore to kill the Prophet and hatched a plot to that end on the eve of his departure to Medina and he was not spared even in the city of his refuge. The Meccans repeatedly sent well-equipped military expeditions against him; the Jews of Medina time and again violated the terms of the treaty and made common cause with the enemies of Islam to exterminate the Muslims. The Hypocrites were a source of constant trouble. Under these circumstances, the Prophet had to take up arms in self-defense, resist force with force. He could not allow himself and his followers to be
annihilated and his mission stifled. The verse permitting (and not ordering) the Muslims to fight, runs as follows: -

“Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged; and Allah is indeed Able to give them victory; those who have been driven from their homes unjustly, only because they said; “Our Lord is Allah...” (22:39-40)

This verse clearly shows that the Muslims were permitted to resort to war in self-defense. And when war is decided upon, it cannot be carried on half heartedly and with cowardice. Fighting cannot be done with kid gloves. It must be pushed with might and main. And the Muslims did it. The tone of the Qur’anic verses relating to the belligerent foes, traitors and persecutors of the Muslims is naturally harsh. But the war ethics of Islam is very noble and humane. One cannot but be struck with the lofty moral tone of the following verses: -

“Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors.” (2:190)

“But if they desist, then Allah is Forgiving, Merciful”. (2:192)

When the enemy desists from hostility, the Muslims must stop fighting for their war is not actuated by greed for lands. If the enemies want peace, peace must be granted to them under Qur’anic injunctions.

“And if they incline to peace, incline you also to it, and trust in Allah. Lo! He is the Hearer, the Knower.” (8:61)

“If ye punish, then punish with the like of that where with ye were afflicted. But if ye endure patiently, verily it is better for the patient.” (16:126)
A limit is set for a victorious Muslim army willing to retaliate, and forbearance is recommended in the strongest terms. Even in the midst of war, if any one of the enemies seeks protection with the Muslims, he must be given protection and escorted to a place of safety. The only Muslim interest, in such a case, is to give him an opportunity to hear the message of the Qur’an. The Qur’an says:

“And If anyone of the idolaters seeketh thy protection, (O Muhammad), then protect him so that he may hear the word of Allah, and afterward convey him to his place of safety. That is because they are a folk who know not.” (9:6)

In spite of Islam’s uncompromising stand on monotheism, Muslims are asked by the Divine revelation not to revile the gods and goddesses whom other people worship.

“Revile not those unto whom they pray beside Allah lest they wrongfully revile Allah through ignorance. Thus unto every nation have We made their deed seem fair. Then unto their Lord is their return and He will tell them what they used to do.” (6:109)

What more toleration of others’ religions can be imagined? It may not be out of place here to take notice of the moral and humanitarian principles guiding the conduct of Muslim generals and soldier’s warfare in general.

It is reported by Abdullah son of Umar that the Prophet of God forbade the killing of women and children (on the battle field).

Malik reports that he heard that Umar son of Abdul Aziz’ wrote to one of his officers, ‘We have heard that when the Prophet of God sent an army he used to instruct it, saying, “Do not commit fraud, do not commit treachery, do not mutilate, do not kill a child.”
In imitation of this noble example of the noble Prophet (saw), Abu Bakr (RA) gave the following instructions to Usama son of Zayd at the time of sending the first expedition to Syria in 632 A.D under his command: -

"See that thou avoidest treachery. Depart not in any wise from the right. Thou shalt mutilate none, neither shalt thou kill the child or aged man, not any women, injure not the date palm, neither burn it with fire, and cut not down any tree wherein is food for man or beast. Slay not the flocks or herds or camels, saving for needful sustenance. You may eat the meat, which the men of the land shall bring unto you in their vessels, making mention there on of the name of the Lord. And the monks with shaven heads, if they submit, leave them unmolested. Now march forward in the name of the Lord, and may He protect you from sword and pestilence."

He gave similar instructions to Yazid son of Abu Sufyan, one of the commanders, when he sent reinforcements to Syria in the spring of 634 A.D.

"Allah forbiddeth you not those who warred not against you on account of religion and drove you not out from your homes, that ye should show them kindness and deal justly with them. Lo! Allah loveth the just dealers." (60:8-9)

Here non-Muslims are classified into two groups’ belligerent foes and peaceful non-Muslims. The former includes those who are out to destroy the Muslims and their faith and those who support and make common cause with the enemies of the Muslims and create disruption in the body politic of Islam by resorting to treachery and treason and the latter includes all non-Muslims and don not contemplate any harm and do not show any enmity to them, particularly those of them who live as neighbors to the Muslims. The Qur’an forbids the Muslims to be friendly towards the mortal enemies of their life and property, religion and state; if they do so they are
traitors and hypocrites themselves. As for the peaceful non-Muslim neighbors the Muslims are enjoined by the Holy Qur’an to deal with them kindly, justly and equitably as humanity demands.\textsuperscript{73}

E. Salvation.
Each religion would claim that salvation is attainable only through that particular religion. Qur’an makes it clear that salvation is not the monopoly of any special race or group of human society. It is open to all people who believe in the truth, and in the life to come and who do good works.

“Whoever works righteousness, man and woman and has Faith, verily, to him We give a new life, and life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions”. (16:97)

“Lo! those who believe, and those who are the Jews, and Sabeans and Christians-whosoever believeth in Allah and the last Day and doth right-there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.” (5:69)

“It will not be in accordance with your desires, nor the desires of the people of the Scriptures. He who doeth wrong will have recompense thereof, and will not find against Allah any protecting friend or helper.” (4:123)

There are three principles enunciated to identify the \textit{din} of Islam, a common gift from God to them, hence the means to salvation. They are

- Worship to one God;
- Utmost importance attached to righteous life; and
- Accountability.
These three principles are three factors, which form the core of the din of Islam in the teachings of all warners, whom God has sent to mankind. There is accountability, in the teachings of all prophets who have preached Divine faith although the forms and concepts of accountability differ somewhat. The last Day, the Judgment Day and the Day of Resurrection, all these refer to an occasion of Accountancy. All religions are rather vague about this Day. Yet the fact that everybody’s actions should be accounted for and assessment made will have a salutary effect on one’s actions.

These three common factors have been clearly and repeatedly emphasized in the Qur’an, as constituting sufficient qualification for man’s salvation, whether he be a Muslim, a Jew, a Christian, a Sabian. Says the Holy Qur’an:

“Surely those who believe, (i.e. the Muslims) and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve”. (2:62)

No other condition for salvation is imposed. Almost the same declaration has been made in verse (5:69). But this does not mean that din is independent of Prophethood or that Shria is of no consequence. On the contrary din was given to mankind through the instrumentality or medium of the prophets. Their duty was to propagate din. Prophethood was the agency and not a part of din. Likewise Shariah is of utmost importance for regulating and purifying life according to the object of the din. Its rules have to be observed, but the difference between them and the principles of the din is that of a goal and the roads that lead to it. The din sets the objective and Shariah is the code of practices, ordained to follow them for achieving that objective. The rules of Shariah are not of the same basic quality as the constituents of the din. They are different from the din just as principles are different from practices.
Righteousness is an extremely important concomitant of din. The Qur'an declares this fact in the following words:

"...Lo! the noblest of you in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware." (49:13)

Worship is righteousness when it is genuine submission of oneself to the will of the Creator. But observing the form of worship only is not real worship, therefore not genuine righteousness. It was perhaps for this reason that Allah has enjoined worship on the followers of all of His prophets, but did not prescribe a uniform style for all of them. He has pointed this out in the following verse:

"Unto each nation have We given sacred rites which they are to perform; so let them not dispute with thee of the matter, but summon thou unto thy Lord. Lo! Thou indeed followest right guidance." (22:66)

Those who follow different styles of worship cannot be all equally on the right course. To every Ummah Allah appointed acts of devotion but they were not all alike in form. The Shariah which Jesus, Moses and Noah were granted by Allah were not exactly alike. The difference between the worship of God and its outward forms is thus evident. Form is graded by the Qur'an at a lower level than inner devotion and is also lower in scale than service to mankind. Verse 2:177 gives elaborate account of those ingredients of good faith and righteousness. A long verse serves as a valuable guide to grasp the difference between the spirit of righteousness and the manifestation of its details. It runs as follows:

"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels and the Scripture and the prophets; and gives his wealth, for love of Him to kinsfolk
and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and to set
slaves free; and observeth proper worship and prayeth the poor due. And those
who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and
adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-
fearing.” (2:177)

*Din* creates the inner inclination to be righteous. The outer side of righteousness is
only the *form*. The emphasis is on good deeds and good deeds alone. The Qur’anic
assertion is that salvation is the result of devotion to God and righteous living and did
not relate it on any racial or group affiliation or an observance of any custom, ritual
or any ceremonial.

An Islamic notion of salvation cannot be equated with Buddhist or Enlightenment
liberation or Christian Salvation. The Islamic notion of salvation is simple and
uncomplicated. It believes that human beings were born into this world as sinless but
with innate religiosity (*al-fitrah*). In addition to this, God made known His will
through messengers. If one follows his or her innate religiosity and accepts the
message, and works righteousness, he or she will be saved in the hereafter. Anyone
who did good or evil will be rewarded or punished accordingly. Contrary to what is
assumed, Islam affirms that Jews, Christians and Sabians can also attain Salvation.

The Qur’an simply states it in the above and below given verses.

“Lo! Thou (O Muhammad) guidest not whom thou lovest, but Allah guideth
whom He will. And He is best aware of those who talk aright.” (28:56)

The Holy Qur’an contains verses, which rules out the concept of community
superiority for any given group: even Muslims have been bracketed here along with
other religious groups. The content of the above verse makes it clear that salvation,
by Islamic standards, depends upon the individual’s own actions, and that it is not the
prerogative of any group. No man or women can earn his or her salvation by the mere fact of associating with a particular group. Salvation will be achievable only by a person who truly believes in God and the world hereafter, and who has given genuine proof in this life by having lived a life of right action.  

Islam does not have a motto of *extra eccesiam nulla salus* (outside the Church there is no salvation); the exclusivism was not an official approach of Islam it has always accepted the possibility of salvation outside its boarders. It affirms the religious truth of Judaism and Christianity. Ismail Raji al Faruqi illustrates the point. The honor with which Islam regards Judaism and Christianity, their founders and scriptures, is not courtesy but acknowledgement of religious truth. Islam sees them in the world not as other views that it has to tolerate, but as standing *de jure* as truly revealed religions from God. Moreover, their legitimate status is neither socio-political, nor cultural or civilizational, but religious which makes Islam unique. For no religion in the world has yet made belief in the truth of other religions a necessary condition of its own faith and witness.

Although Qur’an explicitly states that those Jews, Christians and Sabians who believe in God and the Last Day and work righteous will attain salvation, some Muslim scholars generally have related salvation of the non-Muslims with the recognition of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) by referring to the overall attitude of the Qur’an towards non-Muslims. Even then, they still maintained that salvation has always remained possible outside the borders of Islam. Muhammad al-Ghazali, a spokesperson of Islamic Orthodoxy in his *Faysal-al-Tafriqa-Bayan-al-Islam-Wa-al-Zandaqa* states this:

The above concerns the community of Muhammad, God’s blessing and peace be upon him, in a special way. But I go on to say. The divine mercy will embrace many of the bygone nations, even though most of them will be exposed to the Fire either
slightly, even for a moment or for an hour, or for a period of time, so that one may apply to them the expression of “the delegation of Fire”. Nay more I would say: most of the Christians among the Byzantines (Greeks) and Turks in this time of ours will be embraced by the (same) mercy. If God the Most High wills, I mean those who are among the remote Byzantines and Turks whom the call (to Islam) has not reached.\footnote{78}

From an Islamic point of view, what is crucial for one’s salvation is not one’s formal affiliation to a religion but the personal inner decision when one has been confronted with the call of the Prophet Muhammad (saw). But the question is; in what circumstances can one be considered as the person who received the call of Islam. \textit{Imam Ghazali} argues that there are three conditions under which one can be regarded as a person who has received the call. He maintains one can only be regarded as an unbeliever and therefore is exempted from salvation.\footnote{79}

While Imam Ghazzali is in tone with the generally held belief that belief in the Messengership of Muhammad (saw) is critically important for the salvation, yet he addresses the point regarding those who somehow did not get the true recognition of the Prophet of the Islam. He says:

(I) If one has heard the Prophets name and description in a manner as the Muslim has received it. \textit{Al-Ghazali} says if someone is given an inaccurate portrayal of the Prophet as being a liar and deceitful, and believes so, he or she is not obliged to believe in the Prophet and therefore can be saved even though he or she did not believe him.

II. If one has also seen the miracle manifested in his regard and yet has deliberately refused to consider and reflect on the issue,
III. If one has suppressed a motive for inquiry that possibly could lead to truth in the matter, or the motive arose but was not pursued.\(^{80}\)

One of the distinct qualities of the Qur’an is that it always refrains from making a general judgment about a particular group of people. For instance, it does not say that Muslims will be saved; Christians or Jews will not; rather it personalizes and directs its criticism or praise to specifically qualified people. For instance, it says those who believe in so and so and do such and such will be saved and those who do not believe in so and so and do such and such will be punished. From a Qur’anic perspective; it is quite clear that being a Muslim by no means guarantees salvation. In addition to have faith, one not only has to be vigilant in performing good deeds but also must seek the utmost to accomplish a perfect moral life. Even if a person has done his or her best to achieve salvation, he or she cannot and should not be certain about the end. The Prophet himself did not behave as if he was totally confident that he would be saved. The ideal position for a Muslim in this respect is to adopt an attitude of that he should place itself between khawf (fear) and raja (hope). In other words, a Muslim should neither be absolutely optimistic nor be absolutely pessimistic about his or her own personal salvation. It is, believed that this ambiguous position with regard to salvation that has been a strong motive behind the desire to accomplish a sound moral life. It was such a belief and commitment that functioned as an impulse for the desire for perfection (kamal).\(^{81}\)

In classical Islamic literature, faith is defined as ‘confession by tongue and assent by heart’ (al-iman: iqrarun bil-lisan wa tasdiqun bil-qalb.), though confessing by tongue is not the condition of faith. This is a very interesting definition. According to this definition, it is possible to think that although a person declares that he or she is a Muslim and performs five daily prayers and all the other Islamic duties, there is still a possibility that he or she might not be Muslim in fact.\(^{82}\) The opposite to this is also
the case. For instance, a person because of the circumstances in which he or she lives, who declares that he or she is not Muslim and lives accordingly still has the possibility that he or she might be Muslim in his or her inner being.

Wahidudin khan echoes: What counts at the deepest level in religion is the spirit of the faith not only formal affiliation. This means that even in Islam one may speak in a way of ‘anonymous’ Muslims in faiths other than the Islamic, of persons who breathe the spirit of Islam in truth, though officially belonging elsewhere.\(^8\)

From an Islamic perspective, the resolution of the problem of salvation is easy and uncomplicated. Faith is an assent by the heart act; no one can have access to except God. This means, at the end of the day, no one can really know who will be saved. This was the reason why the question of establishing an attitude towards other faiths has not arisen as a theological question, but a question of law, i.e. how Muslim authorities should deal with the affairs of non-Muslim subjects.\(^9\)

F. Intermarriages

Islam allows the Muslims to marry women from among the people of the Book (i.e. those who follow a revealed religion). The Qur’an says: -

"This day all good things are allowed to you, and the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful to you and your food is lawful to them; and the chaste women from among those who have been given the Book before you (are lawful to you) when you have given them their dowries, taking them in marriage, not fornicating, nor taking them as paramours".

The term *Ahlul Kitab* (people of the Book or scriptures) was originally applied to the Christians and Jews whose scriptures were specifically recognized in the Qur’an as revealed books. Later on its scope was extended to include the Zoroastrians. It is
capable of being further extended to include other peoples provided their scriptures are proved to have been revealed. This is an approach to the universal brotherhood of mankind. Conjugal life is sweetened by love and affection. The Qur'an allows this heavenly relation of conjugal love, which it regards as a sign of God to subsist between a Muslim husband and his non-Muslim wife. The Qur'an refers to this in the following verse:

“And of His signs is this: He created for you helpmates from among yourselves that ye might find rest in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo! Herein indeed are portents for folk who reflect.” (30:22)

Among all ethical terms adopted by the Qur'an perhaps the most widely applicable and the most inclusive of all human situations is the term Taqwa, and which is at once both particular and universal. The best illustrations of this can be found in the verse where the Qur'an calling upon the entire humanity, declares:

O mankind! Lo! We have created you Male and Female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! The noblest you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct”. (49:13)

What else could be more universal in its applicability? Is it not a message to a spiritual and human totality, this worldly and otherworldly. No Prophet can work in a vacuum, and no Divine Revelation can be conveyed without a language, and the language employed must by necessity be the one understood by the people to whom the message is sent. Thus the prophets chosen and appointed, from time to time by God were without exception from among the same people. This is fully recognized by the Qur’an when it declares:
“And We never sent a messenger save with the language of his folk, that he
might make (the Message) clear for them....” (14:4)

The Qur’an also acknowledges the fact that just as people in this creation differ in
features and color, so also, they differ in languages.

“And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the
differences of your Languages and colors. Lo! herein indeed are portents for
men of knowledge.” (30:22)
Notes and References:

1. Wrote Stanton in his treatise, perhaps the first Non-Muslim study of the teaching of the Qur’an. No student of the sacred scriptures of other world religions would disagree with this statement of Shanton. Quoted in the Essays on Islam, by Mohammad Saud, (Hamdard Foundation, Pakistan)


3. Ibid, pp.49-50

4. Ibid, p.50


10. Singh, Op ‘cit, p.49


13. Prophet Muhammad (saw) has said: the whole creation is the family of Allah, so the most beloved person to Allah is he who does the greatest good to His family.


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17 Ibid.p.257
18 Adnan Aslan, Op’cit, p.174
19 Ibid. p.174
20 *Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal
21 Adnan Aslan, Op’cit. P.174
22 Ibid, p.174
23 Ibid, p. 175
27 Hilali, Op’cit. p.9
28 Adnan Aslan, Op’cit. p.176
29 Ibid, p. 176
32 See the International Bill of Human Rights, the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on economic Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.
35 W. M.Watt, Muhammad at Medina (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1977), 221-124
38 *Bukhari and Muslim*
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Bukhari and Muslim

Olayiwola, Op’cit. p.262


Ibid. Pp.5-6


Ibid, p.271

Bukhari and Muslim

Olayiwola, Op’cit. p.271


Adnan Aslan, Op’cit. p.177
66 Al-Qur'an: 11:20, 10:58, 45:20 and 29:50
67 Sahih Al-Bukhari
68 Hilali, Op 'cit. pp,12-13
69 Ibid. p, 14
70 Bukhari and Muslim
71 Muattah Imam Malik
73 Hilali, Op 'cit. Pp, 17-18
74 Adnan Aslan, Op 'cit. p.178
76 Adnan Aslan, Op 'cit. p.178
79 Adnan Aslan, Op 'cit. p.179
81 Adnan Aslan, Op 'cit. p.180
82 In Islamic literature there is another category, called Munafiqun. These people although they were not Muslim in their heart, pretended to be Muslim in their daily affairs. In his time, the Prophet himself was informed about these people by revelation. He did not publicly identify them, but made them known to some of his close friends.
83 Syed Wahiduddin Khan, “Islam and Diversity of Religions” in Islam Christian and Muslim Relations 1 (No. 1, 1990), p.9
84 Adnan Aslan, Op 'cit. p.180
85 Hilali, Op 'cit. Pp, 18-19