Conclusion
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The Islamic response to the challenge of Religious Pluralism can be properly understood with reference to its general perspective on human society, and the mutual respect and regard for differences of views. It recognizes and respects the sanctity of freedom of thought and action.

Pluralism is thought not to mean only the physical proximity of the people of diverse creeds and ethnic origin. It implies interaction on both the individual and collective planes. At the individual level friction is not necessarily eliminated. But intermittent friction has not impaired the cordiality of coexistence at the individual plane. More serious, however is the challenge of collective behavior. The challenge of coexistence between different communities, diverse religious, cultural and ethnic entities has assumed alarming proportions. Public relationship between communities poses the most serious threat to peaceful coexistence in all plural societies. But attempts to lay down principles of coexistence have rarely been made with the sincerity they deserve.

In the post 11 September world, in the name of war on terror, a new impetus has been given to the discourse on Religious Pluralism with special reference to Islam, earlier Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilization” had accentuated the feelings among the non-Muslim intellectuals in particular and the common people in general that Islam remained the only religion with its belief systems, cultural values and civilizational direction which is diametrically opposite to that of modernity. The current propaganda fosters the view that all religions with the exception of Islam support modernity and the ways of mutual harmonious relations. Since this prelude, many in the West have come to view the Islamic world with a mixture of fear and hostility. Violent attacks of the 11 September seem to validate Samuel Huntington’s theory of a “Clash of Civilization”. In the West, Islamic principles, theology and above all
political activity in the name of Islam have become suspect, while traditional schools of learning and the Islamic seminaries, or madaris, have come under special scrutiny. There is widespread debate in the West over the training of Islamic clerics and religious leaders, the authority they hold in their societies, and whether they use this authority to promote violence against Western targets.

Day-in and day-out a lot of material in media comes out, mostly produced by non-Muslims which try to portray Islam and Muslims as the ones who are not only misfits in the so-called progressive world, but form a big hurdle in the creation of harmonious social relations and fostering of inter-religious understandings and human progress. While there are many Muslim countries and lands with foreign-European American, non-Muslim, military forces influencing political, economic, social and intellectual landscapes of the individual countries and the Muslim world in general; there are number of institutions and paraphernalia created to effect an intellectual and cultural change among the Muslims in general. The nature of change and the strategies being employed for effecting the change on varied and somewhere subtle and somewhere very crude, overt and covert oppressions are being conducted to achieve the goals.

In this background a particular intellectual discourse has been emerging. The main participants in this discourse happen to be the non-Muslim so-called experts of Islam who do not subscribe to the core belief system of Islam, and the Westernized Muslim intellectuals who are projected to be the harbingers of the intending change among the Muslims. There is the minimal participation of those who happen to be the loyal spokesmen of the tradition. This way an asymmetrical picture emerges of the discourse relating Islam. Regarding Religious Pluralism it is assumed that to ensure a harmonious social inter-relationship of different inter-religious communities, there is a need for religious communities in general to shun and modify some of their
religious teachings to adapt to the needs of the modern era in the religious communities. The Islam is set apart as the one which is most intolerant of others and is jingoistic and aggressive in its attitude and behavior towards others.

There are many intellectuals mostly western and non-Muslims who have been talking of Islam’s incompatibility with other religious traditions. Though some of them are not very hostile to the Islam as a religion and a tradition yet by and large the whole discourse of religious pluralism is based on a secular ethos, which means a purported social and religious harmony among religious traditions, sought on the bases of peoples perceived visions complimentarity, tolerance, moderation, mutual respect and so on.

Muslims are globally facing a serious onslaught on their countries resources, lives, dignity and culture. Religion is particularly chosen as a target, which anybody can easily aim at. In these circumstances Muslims are not in a position to enter into any sort of dialogue as equal partners as they do not possess that power position and where withal to conflict the enemy. The fact remains that Islam as the last revealed religion upholds the dignity of man irrespective of region, caste, creed, language, ethnicity, nationality and such other physical distinctions. In its long journey of glorious civilization it has harmoniously integrated mired ethnicities across Asia, Europe, and Africa. Yet Islamic scripture and Muslims uphold that Islam is the last authentic revealed religion, which can ensure the true reward to its sincere adherents. It has established guidelines for a civilized interaction with religious communities particularly of those who have divine origin. It ensures that all such interaction, justice, truth, and exemplary behavior should be perused by the adherents of Islam. These values and commitments are not just some secular formulations adopted as a contingency measure for some expediency. They are firmly rooted in the belief
system and community is bound to honour them, observe them, as the ways for getting the blessings of Allah here and hereafter.

Pluralism as a concept has not a very long history in Europe’s myriad idea’s emerging from its secular ethos. It has since developed fast and tried to account for the differences in language, ethnicity, geography, sex and other physical characteristics. It went further and came up with its ideas on Religious Pluralism. Lot of formulations and interpretations heap up in its intellectual stock everyday, while Christianity as a religion has been most intimate with the West, yet no religion as such is left unheeded by the intellectual formulations regarding Religious Pluralism. Unlike the common understanding of religious pluralism as something to accept the existence of multiple religions, religious pluralism is the philosophical school of western thought which makes its formulations for so-called harmonization of relations among different religions based on their presumed versions of different religions. A new set of moderates, enlightened moderates, extremists, fundamentalists, exclusivists, have been designated for the believers of religions.

Islam as a last revealed religion has clear-cut teachings regarding the status of other religions and guidelines and rules for its adherents to interact with people of other faiths. Prophet Muhammad (saw) the companions of the Prophet, Khulfa-i Rashidin, and the long history of Islam as a thriving culture and civilization across Asia, Africa and Europe have demonstrated pretty well the attitude and the behavioral patterns Muslims exhibit towards the people of other faiths.

In the contemporary scenario, despite very heavy odds against the Muslims to present their authentic responses to the issue of better relations among different religious communities, there are some significant Muslim contributions in the field. The mainstream media has tried to ignore them or at least marginalize them so much so
that a common man encounters either the baseless charges of the anti-Islamic forces against Islam as intolerant religion or the apologia produced by the westernized elite among the Muslims. In the Indian context a long tradition of dialogue has been conducted by the Ulema with the leaders of other faiths. Maulana Sayyed Abul Hasan Ali Nadavi, while being rector of a religious seminary Nadvatul Ulema, Lucknow and a scholar of repute in Arabics and Islamic literature, launched a movement in the name of Payam-e-Insaniat, involving intellectuals and religious leaders of other faiths for almost three decades.

Muhammad Legenhausen in his book *Islam and the Religious Pluralism- (1999)* seems to have made a serious effort to critically analyze and philosophical background, logical untenability of the various formulations of religious pluralism and tried to build a new framework for inter-religious relations what he calls non-reductive religious pluralism.

On the intellectual plane Khurram Murad’s intellectual formulations regarding European Churches, a document on Islam is a key Muslim contribution in the area, so much so that Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, and the Churches Commission for Interfaith Relations amended its document on Christian Relations with Islam, taking full cognizance of Murad’s objections to the concept of reciprocity forwarded by the church and his arguments for alternative scheme of inter religious relations based on the belief and values enunciated by Islam.

Currently Muslims are not confined to the so-called Muslim nations only; they are now part of Europe and America as well. The fact remains that majority of the Muslims live now in the non-Muslim countries. They are fully conscious of their duties as responsible law abiding citizens, taxpayers, good neighbors, but at the same time they are part and parcel of Islam’s global fraternity, as trustees of last divine
message for mankind. They are not ready to relinquish their faith and culture as a pre condition for being called civilized moderates, and the enlightened. It is because the Muslims refusal to compromise their faith and culture that they are subject to witch-hunt globally and bands of so-called intellectuals preach them to let their religion under go secularization and they too get assimilated in the wide non-Islamic cultures. It is high time that contemporary nature of the challenges and Islam’s response is seen in proper perspective and alternative strategies are formulated based on the Islamic guidelines for ensuring civilized interactions between different religions. Once this is achieved it will really ensure morally upright, logically tenable, just system of religious pluralism, not the one which is imposed currently and is subjecting religions to worst type of mutilations.