

Symbiosis, Facilitation and Respectful Relationships in Islamic Teachings

Hakim Koucheki¹, Abdelfattah Kabbara²

1. PhD Scholar, Islamic Research, Imam Ouzai Faculty, Beirut, Lebanon

2. Supervisor: Dr. Abdelfattah Kabbara, Professor of Comparative Jurisprudence and Family Laws, Imam Ouzai Faculty

Corresponding Author email: Hakim_k1342@yahoo.com

Abstract: Like other mainstream divine religions, Islam is a religion based on belief in monotheism, peace, respect, symbiosis, facilitation, etc. It came to build a better world and a better hereafter for mankind by reforming institutions, customs, lifestyles, relationships, cultures, etc. in the families as well as in the societies. It is a religion based on “peaceful surrender” which is the very meaning of the word “Islam”. Peaceful and respectful symbiosis in the Muslim world and in relation to followers of other faiths is what Islamic teachings are based on. In the course of history, cultures, institutions, norms and values have developed in the human societies, and Islam has respected them and coexisted with them. It has, in many cases, developed, expanded and preached these values. It does not teach a sophisticated set of rules and regulations based on bias, rather, it invites the individuals to study, think, learn, share, respect and want what they like for themselves, for other human beings as well. It has lived in harmony with all other systems and civilizations. It is the religion of freedom and facilitation. It leaves each and every human soul free to analyze and either accept or reject its teachings. Of course, it clearly mentions what the consequences of either ways will be in this world and the life after it. Therefore, respect to human freedom and dignity could be easily observed in the Quran:

﴿وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ...﴾ (الاسراء: ٧٠)

﴿And We bestowed dignity on the children of 'Adam...﴾ (Al-Asraa: 70)

Therefore, in this article, we will explore the Holy Quran as the first and foremost source of Islamic teachings, focusing on its verses that discuss symbiosis, facilitation, respect and harmonious coexistence. We will also show the impacts of these teachings on the lifestyles of people in the Muslim and the non-Muslim world. The second valid source in the Islamic faith is *hadiths* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad SW which also will be explored in this respect. Objective of this study is to show harmonious symbiosis, respect, peace and love as great pillars of Islamic faith which are deeply institutionalized in the beliefs of Muslims so that, based on them, more harmonious societies could be built.

Keywords: symbiosis, respect, facilitation, dignity, Islam, Quran, *hadith*, relationship

INTRODUCTION

Islam preaches peace and respect as well as full surrender to one deity. It is based on the teachings of the Holy Quran sent down to Muhammad SW, and gave him responsibility to preach it to whole mankind. It spread in the 7th century AD in the Arabian Peninsula. Then, in the course of centuries, it spread all over the world. Islam is the latest divine religion for mankind which came after Judaism and Christianity and approves the contents of the Torah and Enjeel (the Gospels). It states many things which the People of the Book have changed and distorted. It includes all means of achieving success in this world and hereafter. It also includes the latest of all divine books and contains the spirit and message of all of them. Islam has come to correct all wrongs of the society such as social, economic and political problems. Therefore, it is both a religion and a system of life. In addition to being the religion of respect, forgiveness, and removal of impasses and difficulties, it is a legislating and a general divine lawmaking system. Islam means submission and entrusting all issues to God. It means submission to instructions of God, finding peace with him and reliance on him. It means following his orders and avoiding what he has forbidden.

Islam is a religion that takes care of all issues of the individuals, either religious or worldly issues. Its legislator corrects all aspects of life in the society including political, economic, military, social and educational aspects.

The religion of Islam, sent by God Almighty through the Holy prophet Muhammad SW, is a pure religion which is not mixed with any innovation in beliefs or in practice. It includes all correct beliefs, useful knowledge and good deeds, as God Almighty says:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظَاهِرَهُ عَلَىٰ الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ﴾ (التوبة: ٣٣)

﴿He is the One who has sent down His Messenger with guidance and the Faith of Truth, so that He makes it prevail over every faith, no matter how the Mushriks may hate it﴾ (Sura Al-Tauba: Verse 33)

Then, Islam is the religion of respect and symbiosis. The most obvious reason for this is that it is a religion based on rational freedom of ideas and is not confined to one form of thought system, ideology or legislative system. Along with this freedom, it is a religion accordant with all right cultures and norms, and the survived civilizations which human mind collectively confesses are good for humanity and for its development, from the viewpoint of development of reason and life. (Shaltout, Mahmud, 2001, 9)

It is also the religion of respect and symbiosis in beliefs, rituals, trade, customs and other aspects of legislation. Therefore, its beliefs are not on the basis of complicated philosophy or absolute surrender, or not on opposition to human nature and mentality. The Quran gives mankind total freedom to think about his self and about the heavens and earth. It invites men and women to believe in one God; however, it never forces them to believe.

﴿ وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ... ﴾ (الكهف: ٢٩)

﴿And say, :The truth is from your Lord. Now, whoever so wills may believe and whoever so wills may deny...﴾ (Al-Kahf: 29)

Those who believe in the Quran and ponder upon it, easily understand the truth about respect and rebate in Islam with the biggest topic it puts forward. This subject is monotheism which is clarified in a simple way and is understandable so much so that every sane and wise person will understand. It is presented in tangible ways so that people can understand it in the easiest way. It deduces truths of faith in this way.

In the history of Islamic governments and during the times of this religion's ups and downs, a lot of non-Muslims have lived in Islamic countries, but they have never been forced to leave their beliefs or to accept Islam. The biggest principle and rule in Islam is that there is no compulsion in religion; because of this, the people under protection and others have lived in the Islamic governments without being subject to aggression about their beliefs and religions. (Saleh Ibn Hamid, 1992, 30)

Islam is not based on oppression of opponents, confiscation of their rights, forcefully making them denounce their beliefs, tyrannous seizure of their properties, violation of their dignity and shedding their blood. In this regard, history of Islam is one of the purest ones. (Alghazali, Muhammad, 1989, 6)

It starts with the faith-related instructions and these are the first rules the Holy Prophet SW called people towards. (Al-Marsafavi, Fathi, 1980, 13-14)

This is clearly understandable from the text of the Quran:

﴿ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴾ (الانبياء: ٢٥)

﴿We did not send before you any messenger but We revealed to him that there is no god but I, so worship Me﴾. (Al-Anbia: 25)

﴿ وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ... ﴾ (النحل: ٣٦)

﴿ We did raise a messenger among every people, with the message: :Worship Allah and stay away from the Rebel (the Satan). Then, there were some among them whom Allah guided, and there were others against whom deviation (from the right path (was established... (An-Nahl: 36)

The Impact of Belief in Human Life

Islamic lifestyle deeply focuses on establishing this great truth and authenticating it in the human conscience, and in order to guide it into the right path, it has followed all methods of human dignity. It has applied different forms of encouraging, influencing, expressing and proving so that the truth about servitude to the one and only God and submission to him without believing in any other deity gets established in the nature of mankind, of course, considering the fact that this servitude and submission includes all beings and is not confined to mankind. (Qutb, Seyed, 1988, 82)

It has also mentioned the unique dignity of mankind to him and has let him know this dignity effectively, deeply and easily; so this knowledge becomes inspiring the demands of divinity, creator of hidden feelings and practical demands.

They are all because this fact is a principle upon which faith of Muslims is based, and its ideology originates from that fact. It is a truth in its nature –as it is in the real world. In addition to that, its effects in the generalities and details of human life cannot be compared to any other effect. This principle has a determining effect in formation and structure of beliefs and their power, in clearness of imagination and purifying it, and in correcting every diversion that human conscience experiences or might experience.

In addition to that, it has an influential effect on feelings and behaviors, because it is impossible that feelings, behaviors or manners get corrected while this principle is complicated, disorganized or missing in the conscience. On the other hand, it has an effective influence on real human life with all its values and criteria, customs and traditions, organizations, positions, policy, society, economy, culture, science, arts, activities with phenomena and different aspects of them. Because it is this principle that correctly determines for mankind the rules of dealing with horizons and the worlds that challenge human beings. It includes his interrelationship with his God, with the world around him or with other human beings in all interactions, connections and situations. It

is from this principle that all rules of interrelationship and dealing with those horizons and worlds originate and they are all based on that very principle.

The topic of servitude to the one and only God, along with regarding no partner or rival for him, is the first religious and true premise of all divine religions during centuries and eras. This is a fact that God emphasizes in his truthful glorious book. (Qutb, Seyed, 82-84)

The human soul that includes the remarkable power of belief becomes very strong, because a soul that has belief and credence has a firm and strong foundation, and its pillars are stable. It never cares about disasters and hardships of life and does not give in to heavy responsibilities of life, because it carries in itself the true belief and the truth. As God Almighty says:

﴿ إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ ﴾ (القمر: ٢٥)

﴿ Verily, We have created everything according to (Our) predestination. ﴾. (Al-Qamar: 25)

A more detailed study shows that during the time the Holy Prophet SW spent in Mecca after the first revelation - 13 years- his message was based on two important and strong sources:

First source: was the belief that focused on invitation towards unity, monotheism and belief in the Day of Judgment.

Second source: was based on the purification of soul and cleansing it by the use of moral values and great patterns. (Kashk, Abdul-Hamid, 3)

The authentic belief of a believer is to admit wholeheartedly and endlessly that God is the originator who predestinates everything. It has to be such a belief that never leaves a piece of doubt in the heart of its owner about power and glory of God and makes its owner attribute nothing to other than God. Therefore, God is the creator with who nobody shares the creation; and everyone, who attributes organization, administration and direction of the affairs to anyone other than God, has defects in his beliefs and should correct them. (Kashk, Abdul-Hamid, 8-9)

God Almighty says:

﴿ ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۗ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴾ (الانعام: ١٠٢)

﴿ This is Allah: your Lord, there is no God but He, the Creator of everything; so ,worship Him. He is Guardian over everything. ﴾. (Al-Anaam: 102)

If the believer strongly believes in the one God, gets to know his pure monotheism and unity as he Almighty deserves, he/she will find peace and will stand firm against all difficulties of life with all its storms, lightening, thunders and sandstorms. It is from here that the Holy Quran opens the gates of its holy lessons to project the rays of unity and the reasons of power upon the hearts so that it builds the structure of souls correctly on the basis of piety and divine satisfaction.

By having this perspective, this belief presents a promoted lifestyle in Islam that is based on growing up of conscience so that conscience becomes a trustworthy guardian of behaviors of individuals and communities. Beliefs give people a social lifestyle which is based on right morals and behaviors. Of course, it is along with being inspired by this belief that believing in the strong and almighty God strengthens it with justice in rights and duties.

These beliefs make the Muslims believe that in the worldly life, in fact, he works for the life that is to come hereafter because life turns into a tool to reach that goal, and if the tools are right and correct, the goal is also right and correct; and achieving the goal becomes purpose of life. God Almighty says in this regard:

﴿ وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ... ﴾ (القصص: ٧٧)

﴿ And seek the (betterment of) the Ultimate Abode with what Allah has given to you, and do not neglect your share from this world, and do good as Allah did good to you... ﴾ (Al-Qisas: 77)

When we think of the changes true belief brings in human life, we find out that extraordinary things and miracles that happen for human beings are nothing compared to the influence of this belief which gets into his flesh and blood. It is because the believing person feels amazing waves and forces which make him leave personal joys and exterior benefits and turn to inwardly joys and benefits. He is directed towards them by a hidden motivation; and on the way of achieving that goal, everything becomes easy. In the elevated lives of individuals, it is observed that they are led and reasoned by an elevated spiritual leader. It is a leader and a commander who, among other people, calls to forgetting of the individual's self and sacrificing of his temporary wishes, a leader who directs them towards a superior goal, a higher horizon and a better life. The further the goal is, the higher the purpose and the cleaner the intention, the greater will be the response, the faster the reply, the wider the reflection and the stronger will be its continuation. It is in this way that we understand the reasons for existence of God in the Holy Quran so easily. It makes Islamic belief so easy and away from vagueness and complication. (Arjun, Muhammad Al-Sadiq, vol.1, 658-659)

One of the most outstanding subjects that show belief is facilitated in Islam is the issue of God Almighty's existence and his characteristics. It includes the subject of resurrection, judgment and rewarding or punishment in order to realize justice and divine mercy.

The followings are some of the features and characteristics of this belief

The Moderate Belief

Islamic belief calls to moderation and balance, not to indolence or extravagance. God Almighty says:

﴿ وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا... ﴾ (البقرة: ١٤٣)

﴿ In the same way We made you a moderate Ummah (community), so that you should be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger a witness to you... ﴾ (Al-Baqara: 143)

This nation (*ummah*) is different most obviously in one of its features called moderation in belief, a moderation that equalizes everything; it makes that middle path the differentiating point between extravagance and dissipation. The Islamic nation is the differentiating point which keeps the nation away from extravagance and dissipation. Non-Islamic countries have fallen into the trap of this extravagance or dissipation. (Jaber, Hussein ibn Mohsen ibn Ali, 2002, 35)

The Method of Respect and Facilitation

When faith in the conscience of human beings destroys material values and modesty before them, along with that, it destroys negative tendency in life.

Therefore, the system of Islam is the system of moderation. It does not burden on human souls more than what they can do, neither does it deprive them from benefits and cleanliness they need, of course to the extend God has made it legitimate and *halaal*. Therefore in its way of life, there is no strictness, hardship, tiredness and suffering. God Almighty says:

﴿ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ... ﴾ (البقرة: ٢٨٦)

﴿ Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity. For him is what he has earned, and on him what he has incurred... ﴾ (Al-Baqara: 286)

﴿... يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمْ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمْ الْعُسْرَ... ﴾ (البقرة: ١٨٥)

﴿...Allah intends (to provide) ease for you and does not intend (to create) hardship for you... ﴾ (Al-Baqara: 185)

﴿... وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ... ﴾ (الحج: ٧٨)

﴿...He has imposed no difficulties on you in religion ... ﴾ (Al-Hajj: 78)

Then the basis of this religion is on respect and rebate not on strictness and heaviness. The best and most beautiful statement in this regard is the divine saying:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ ﴾ (القمر: ١٧، ٢٢، ٣٢، ٤٠)

﴿Indeed We have made the Qur'an easy for seeking advice. So, is there one to heed to the advice?﴾ (Al-Qamar: 17, 22, 32, 40)

﴿ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ ﴾ (النساء: ٢٨)

﴿ Allah intends to make things easy on you... ﴾ (An-Nisaa: 28)

Islamic faith is one of facilitation and easiness, a belief in which there is spirit and material, justice and power, science and religion, and this world and hereafter. It is a monotheistic belief that plants dignity and freedom in the soul and spirit and regards demission and modesty before anyone other than God as infidelity, debauchery and injustice. It never accepts that human beings consider each other as Gods. Now that faith has such an influence in all countries of the world, its effect should be so deep and its necessity must be bigger and stronger in all Islamic countries. So, symbiosis and forgiveness include all aspects of Islamic belief such as symbiosis and softness in inviting the opponents, and moderation and respect with the fellow believers. Humanity and forgivingness dominate all aspects of Islam including rituals, trade, preaching, politics and the ruling system. So, humanity and greatness of belief are the outstanding features of preachers in the time of vindication and guiding others to Islam.

The Relationship between Belief, Facilitation and Forgiveness

In the Islamic teachings, humanity in the beliefs of mankind has no relationship with the essence of existence of God, because this issue is an instinctive issue and all healthy and clear natures believe in it. Humanity and symbiosis of beliefs in Islam is related to the method with which the Quran cures digressed phenomena. Some of the general and direct effects of these phenomena are regarding partners to God, worshipping deities other than God with different forms and types which are all against the divinity of God –that requires the most perfect qualities which the mind cannot digest, and could not be written or spoken thoroughly.

That is why, we can see in many clear and decisive Quranic verses, the issue of divine entity is discussed as a certain and natural issue. It then states a decisive deduction that in understanding its truth, the greatest minds which think so deeply are no different from the simple minds which digest the subject in the early stages. It is one of the general contents of invitation to Islam that God Almighty has made the Quran his rules and instructions and has regarded influencing of minds as part of its easiness and respect. So, every mind finds the chance to understand the truth which it is ready to accept. (Arjun, Muhammad Al-Sadiq, 1, 639-640)

In addition to that, the Holy Quran is the most exalted book of law and instructions; it is a spring, whose streams are flowing in life; it is our spring that satisfies us with its rules, truth and proofs stating the principles of

Islamic symbiosis and respect in order to establish the truth of foundations of belief from which all principles of Islamic symbiosis and gratitude in lawmaking originate. (Arjun, Muhammad Al-Sadiq, 681)

The fundamentals of belief in Islam require that social rules and regulations be derived from this religion; and rituals and moralities overflow from this source. The thinkers get amazed to know easiness of this stable religion which makes it closer to hearts and minds. It puts this religion in a level that is generally easy to understand for mankind. It doesn't stand philosophical complications, vagueness of secrets of monks and phrases of scientific experts who waste lives of people without reaching a corrected conclusion with them, so that upon that conclusion, they can establish the relationship of the servant with his God and creator, relationship of human beings with their fellow human beings, and relationship of human beings with the objects around them in their daily lives.

These optimizing conditions are the very purpose and objective of Islamic rules; then, if belief cannot achieve it with its symbiosis of nature, it would be a heavy load on human conscience which will make him shiver and confuse his desires, and life creates a mixture of options before him alongside individuals and groups. (Arjun, Muhammad Al-Sadiq, 625)

This specialty of the Quran is the very spirit of symbiosis and respect of beliefs whose objective is not deceiving minds to capture them forcefully; but it gives all minds, in accordance with their levels and natural and acquisitive differences, the chance to understand the truths which scientific and mental talents put in his domain in such a way that he finds peace with them and his mental confusion and scurry gets removed with it. It has to be considered that the nature of belief in Islam- whose greatest phenomenon is its symbiosis and respect- is a real simple belief that minds do not need to struggle much to understand. Its facts are not unreachable for minds, it is free from deceit and fear, and there is no secret or mystery in it. Its position is the position of justice and moderation in Islamic belief which originates from the Quran and the pure *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet SW.

Human beings need to believe in some source. Belief and faith is something that has a position in the soul and gets established in the heart. Mankind cannot deny it because the self and the nature, that God has created and has put tendency towards creator in it, can never change its nature, although it gets further away from the divine ways.

God Almighty says:

{...فَطَرَتِ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ عَلَيَّهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ...} (الروم: ٣٠)

{...this (faith) being the nature designed by Allah on which He has created the mankind. There is no change in Allah's creation...} . (Ar-Rum, 30)

{وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا* فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا* قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا* وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا} (الشمس: ١٠-٧)

{ and by the soul, and the One who made it well*then inspired it with its (instincts of) evil and piety *success is really attained by him who purifies it *and failure is really suffered by him who pollutes it} . (Ash-Shams, 7-10)

What we already know about the meaning of facilitation and respect in belief is its softness, easiness and simplicity of method, lack of hardships and complicated philosophies, and easiness to understand for everyone.

Respect and Facilitation of Islam in Accepting Freedom of Belief

Islam is a religion that insists on freedom of beliefs and denies compulsion and force. It insists on total freedom in accepting Islamic beliefs. When God Almighty brought Islam, Muslims wanted to force people to accept it, but God Almighty prohibited them from doing so, in order that people remain free to follow Islam and this verse was revealed:

{ لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ...} (البقره: ٢٥٦)

{ There is no compulsion in Faith...} (Al-Baqara: 256)

The Holy Prophet SW says:

{«قَدْ خَيْرَ أَصْحَابِكُمْ، فَإِنْ اخْتَارُوكُمْ فَهُمْ مِنْكُمْ، وَإِنْ اخْتَارَوْهُمْ فَهُمْ مِنْهُمْ»} (أبو بكر أحمد بن الحسين بن علي البيهقي، علاء الدين علي بن عثمان المارديني مشهور بهابن التركماني، ١٣٤٤ هـ - ٩، ١٨٦).

"Your friends and companions are free; if they choose you, then they are from you; and if they choose them, they are from them" (Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Al-Hussein ibn Ali Al-Beihaqi, Ala-Eddin Ali ibn Othman Al-Mardini known as Bahaa ibn At-Turkamani, 1926, 9, 186)

Therefore, the individual has the freedom to choose his faith without any compulsion.

Sharia or the law in this religion has guaranteed this freedom as the fruit of its accountability and has forbidden any means and tools of compulsion. In the meantime, it emphasizes on the necessity of presenting truth, stating proofs and decisive reasons on establishing beliefs, leaving the responsibility of maintaining and defending the beliefs to the individuals and groups, preventing insurrection of insurrectionists even by the use of force, and on efforts to undo all plans of enemies. (Al-Ghonoushi, Rashed, 1993, 44)

The interpretations and jurisprudence books have nearly selected the following verse as one of the greatest principles of respect and facilitation in Islam and its greatness.

﴿ لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ... ﴾ (البقره: ٢٥٦)

(There is no compulsion in Faith...) (Al-Baqara: 256)

This selection is because this verse allows no one to impose Islam on anybody and neither does it let anybody to force his/her family renounces their belief in it. In order to guarantee avoiding force, Islam has made it necessary for Muslims to use force so that they can face those who try to put them in insurrection regarding their religion. It orders Muslims to use wise methods and good speech in inviting their enemies to Islam so that the right path and that of aberration could be distinguished from one another. (Abduh, Muhammad, and Rashid Reza, Muhammad, 1997, and Ibn Ashur, Muhammad At-Taher)

The Compassionate God has not structured the faith on compulsion; but has structured it on the freedom to choose or to refuse. In case of compulsion, there is no sense in testing and trial, like this saying of God Almighty:

﴿ وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ... ﴾ (الكهف: ٢٩)

﴿ And say, :The truth is from your Lord. Now, whoever so wills may believe and whoever so wills may deny... ﴾ (Al-Kahf: 29)

When the place of belief is heart, it is impossible that compulsion can enter it.

We mean, by freedom of belief here, the fact that man has the freedom to choose what his reasoning and understanding tells him in religion. Therefore, no one has the right to force him with any means of compulsion, to accept a certain belief or faith or to force him change his faith. (Al-Saidi, Abdul-Motaal, D. T. 6-7) Therefore, Islamic law never allows any human being to believe in it without thinking and reasoning about it. (Odat, Abdul-Qader, 1949, 1, 26)

Even in declaring the unity of God Almighty, the Holy Prophet SW did not limit himself to miracle and extraordinary things, but he called people to apply intellect and free their reasoning ability; and after that asked them to believe if they wanted or to deny if they did not want. Because of this divine saying:

﴿ وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ... ﴾ (الكهف: ٢٩)

﴿ And say, :The truth is from your Lord. Now, whoever so wills may believe and whoever so wills may deny... ﴾ (Al-Kahf: 29)

That is why the Quran criticizes the nation whose belief is blind imitation of others without awareness or thinking. (Al-Ali, Abdul-Hakim Hassan, 1983, 385)

Hence, the holy prophets and others do not have the right to impose belief and faith on people and force them to believe in a special faith. Because of this, God Almighty addresses his prophet SW and tells him about his mission:

﴿ فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ * لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ ﴾ (الغاشية: ٢٢-٢١)

﴿(So, (O Prophet,) keep on preaching; you are only a preacher* You are not a taskmaster set up over them)﴾, (Al-Ghashia: 21-22)

﴿ وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا ۚ أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾ (يونس: ٩٩)

﴿ Had your Lord willed, all those on earth would have believed altogether. Would you, then, compel people, so that they become believers? ﴾ (Yunus: 99)

Islamic *sharia* has taken some procedures to support freedom of belief:

These procedures include two steps:

Making people respect other people's rights in whatsoever they believe; so, no one can force anyone to believe in one faith or leave one.

Making believer of any belief to try to defend his belief and not to take negative attitude towards it, even if he has to immigrate to another country where his freedom of belief can be guaranteed and he can announce his belief. Then if he does not immigrate while he has the ability to do so, before others, he has been unjust to himself, has committed a big sin and deserves to be punished. However, if he is unable to immigrate, then God never obligates anyone beyond his capacity. (Al-Ali, Abdul-Hakim Hassan, 386)

God Almighty says:

﴿ إِنَّ الدِّينَ تَوْفَاقُهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ ۖ قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا... ﴾ (النساء: ٩٩-٩٧)

﴿ Those whose souls the angels take while they had wronged themselves, the angels say (to them), :In what business were you (involved)? They say, :We were oppressed in the earth. They say, :Was not the earth of Allah wide enough for you to emigrate to it?... ﴾ (An-Nisaa: 97-99)

This is a proof for rejection of compulsion and religious forcing in Islam, even if it is about accepting one's own religion. About freedom of belief in Islam too, no one has the authority over it, either it be the ruler, or the guide, teacher, boss, or caretaker of the family.

It is with this background that Islam has removed the structure of individual religious domination and cleansed its influence so much so that according to almost all experts, there is no sign of it, because after God and the Prophet SW, the Islamic *shaira* has given no one the authority to dominate anyone's belief or faith. The Prophet SW was just a preacher and a reminder, not a dominator nor an autocrat. (Al-Ali, Abdul-Hakim Hassan, 387)

For maintaining surety, guaranteeing security, peace and safety of believers in other faiths, Islam makes a lot of efforts; and its recommendations are a lot in this regard. God Almighty says:

﴿ لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴾ (الممتحنة: ٨)

﴿ Allah does not forbid you as regards those who did not fight you on account of faith, and did not expel you from your homes, that you do good to them, and deal justly with them. Surely Allah loves those who maintain justice ﴾ (Al-Mumtahina: 8)

Because this basic rule is followed in Islam, a lot of People of the Book and tribute payers live in the Islamic countries, no one violates their rights because of their beliefs, and they have never been forced to leave their faiths. It is because the general source and origin Islam has established is this saying of God Almighty:

﴿ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ ﴾ (الكافرون: ٦)

﴿ For you is your faith, and for me, my faith ﴾. (Al-Kafirun: 6)

Also the Holy Prophet SW says:

"«اتركوهم وما يدينون لهم ما لنا وعليهم ما علينا»"

"Leave them with their religion and belief, whatever is for us, is for them too, and whatever is on us, is on them too" (Al-Kasani, Al-Imam Ala-Eddin Abubakr ibn Masud AL-Kasani Al-Hanafi, 1328, 7, 100, 2, 37)

For believers of other faiths, Islam guarantees their practice of their own rituals and religious customs within the limits of public order and correct observation of norms, as it has guaranteed it for its own believers. It has made it free for them to have interrelations and lawsuit in what is related to their faiths, of course, so much so that it is legitimate and accepted among their own believers. (Haridi, Al-Sheikh Ahmad, 1968, 95)

When the second caliph of Muslim world, Caliph Omar ibn Khattab RA signed a treaty with inhabitants of Jerusalem after conquering it, he followed this way: it says: "In the name of God, this is the safe conduct that Amir Al-Mumineen Omar ibn Khattab gives the people of Ilia: he gives them safe conduct in their souls, properties, churches, crosses, patients, the healthy and their other people, no one shall live in their churches, they shall not be destroyed and nothing shall be taken from them, neither from their crosses nor from their properties. Their people shall not be forced to leave their faiths and no one of them will be hurt or suffer any loss. (Al-Tamavi, Suleiman, Muhammad, 1976, 379-380)

Therefore, it is crystal-clear that the mission of the Holy Prophet SW and religious scholars was not to force people to accept religion, but to warn them and to preach. In this way, the method of inviting towards monotheism, worshipping God and piety for him is proof and reason not sword and compulsion. In some verses of the Holy Quran, there are clear proofs to use forgiveness, pardon, wise invitation, and discussion in the good way or rejection of any form of compulsion in religion.

The Limits of Religious Freedom

Freedom in faith also has to have its own limits and regulations. The logic of Islam in respect and symbiosis with believers of other faiths from the People of the Book was that they worship God according to the monotheistic understanding. God Almighty says:

﴿ سَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ ۗ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ ۗ اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُنِيبُ ﴾ (الشورى: ١٣)

﴿ He has ordained for you people the same religion as He had enjoined upon NuH ,and that which We have revealed to you (O prophet,) and that which We had enjoined upon Ibrahim and Musa and Isa, by saying, :Establish the religion, and be not divided therein. Arduous for the mushriks (polytheists) is that to which you are inviting them. Allah chooses (and pulls) toward Himself anyone He wills ,and guides to Himself anyone who turns to Him (to seek guidance) ﴾ (Ash-Shura, 13)

Of course, It is never allowed for Muslims to have relationship, sign contracts or get married to *mushriks* who worship deities other than God or deny him, because *shirk* is against the whole Islamic system. (Odat, Abdul-Qader, 661, 662-1)

It has to be mentioned that the People of the Book can express their rituals; of course, as long as they do not lead to insurrection and anarchy. They can also ring their bells in the times other than praying times of Muslims so that it does not intervene their rituals. (Abu-Yusuf, Yaghoub ibn Ibrahim, 1933, 146)

Furthermore, there are conditions and rules mentioned in Islam for religious disputes and arguments, it has put the condition that they must not lead to infidelity and must be done wisely and with good speech and no argument must be done except in the best way.

In this way, Islam places some restrictions to prevent insurrection, stop unrest, create peace and guarantee freedom in its true form for freedom of faith. Because of that, we also need respect, forgiveness and easygoing in affairs that might include hardship and compulsion. Abubakr ibn Abi-Dunya states: 'Hussein Abdu-Rahman RH gave me this piece of advice: "if you do not have forgiveness and symbiosis in affairs, they will get hard for you; then take easy and mix hardship with easiness because I have not a better solution than piety for disaster and hardship, and better than patience for obligation". (Abubakr ibn Abi-Dunya, 1989, 45)

Intellectual and Practical Freedoms of Beliefs

Freedom of belief means removal of any type of religious prejudice, it means supporting rights of Muslims in the countries where they are minorities, because the Islamic *ummah* maintains freedom of activity and practicing religious rituals for non-Muslims to the extent that it does not create any problem in their lives or does not put their dignity in question. The Islamic *sharia* prospers the strong will of freedom in human beings so that they get to know how to find their ways clearly and get to know what requirements selecting this way needs.

Hence, freedom of belief in Islam means that there is no compulsion in religion and of course this is not freedom of chaos and unrest, but it is the freedom of commitment to elevated principles and moralities which provide security and stability of nations. This is because it prevents war and bloodshed among nations with religious motivations, and in the meantime, it provides the chance to have constructive and intellectual talks. This makes it possible for nations to grow and mature and elevate their levels of awareness and accountability in building themselves on the strong and stable bases and principles of truth and reality.

In Islam, civil rights are given to all members of the society and no difference is regarded among them about this right, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims, men or women, poor or rich; so, they all have equal rights, and equal civil rules govern them. They all live in safety regarding their lives, properties, dignity and personal freedom. With struggles to free slaves and guaranteeing freedom of accused ones until their crimes are proved, Islam is outstanding among all other legislative systems. Briefly, as a result of preventing punitive rules in retaliation, freedom has found an appropriate space; in addition to that, moral rules awaken conscience and give it responsibility to supervise the expedience of the society. (Al-Nabravi, Khadija, Hassan Abbas, Zaki, Ali Juma, Muhammad, 4, 336-337)

In the Islamic society where non-Muslims minorities live, Islam never deprives them from pardoning and freedom. It gives them not only freedom in what guarantees practicing their rituals, but also freedom in what makes them citizens of this society and members of it; it provides them freedom and dignity away from isolation and marginalization. It allows Muslims to marry People of the Book and eat their foods.

God Almighty says:

﴿الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَلٌّ لَكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حَلٌّ لَهُمْ...﴾ (المائدة: ٥)

﴿ This day, good things have been made lawful for you. The food of the people of the Book is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them... ﴾ (Al-Maeda: 5)

According to Az-Zahili in his *The Right of Freedom in the World*: "it is not proved in history that a Muslim has ever forced a non-Muslim to accept Islam, and non-Muslims have always lived under total support in practicing their beliefs, rituals and religious activities without any interference. (Az-Zahili, Wahba, 2000, 147) That is why history has never witnessed a single Muslim nation force the tribute payers to follow Islam; on the contrary, enemies of Islam made Muslims leave their faith. They themselves have confessed that. (Taysir Khamis Al-Omar, 19)

Respect and symbiosis with tribute payers is observable in respecting their beliefs, their freedom of activity, and equality with Muslims. Their only difference is in paying tribute. Paying tribute is based on the fact that it obligates Muslims to protect lives of tribute payers, protect their properties, dignity, public and personal freedoms, and whatever guarantees an honorable life for them in an Islamic society.

Islam makes efforts to grant freedom of faith and tries to culminate and make it reach the level of respecting their activities, not forcing them to stop or change such activities, and preventing Muslims from dispute with them- especially People of the Book- except in the best way. God Almighty says:

﴿وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ...﴾ (العنكبوت: ٤٦)

﴿ Do not debate with the people of the Book unless it is in the best manner, except with those of them who commit injustice... ﴾ (Al-Ankabout: 46)

The fundamentals of Islamic respect and symbiosis do not apply only to Muslims, but it goes beyond them and includes opponents of divine religions too, i.e. those who live under the flag of Islam. The Holy Quran and the Prophet's *sunnah* emphasize on this fact, and the *sharia* taken from these two clearly focuses on this principle. This principle is symbiosis and forgiving of confederates who live in the Islamic society under the flag of Islam.

History approves that Muslims behaved nicely towards non-Muslims who had all their rights, have felt security and safety, and have lived while having all their religious and material rights, of course as long as they have respected social conditions of Islam and have not preached ideologies and beliefs that harm Islamic society and are against the security of Islamic government.

Institutionalizing freedoms in the real life creates the practical way of achieving principle goals in the Islamic society and lets human beings fulfill the requirements of succession on earth. The subject matter of freedom of thoughts is related to the activities of human mind whether it is related to selection of a certain belief, practicing any kind of ritual, practicing education, or statement of opinions and ideas with legitimate and lawful tools.

God Almighty has put a path before our Holy Prophet SW who precisely follows this path in preaching his message. Respect to human freedom is shown in beliefs and he has ordered the Holy Prophet to rationally persuade people and present truths of faith with proofs and reasons. Signs of this route are observable in many verses:

﴿ قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴾ (يوسف: ١٠٨)
 { Say, :This is my way. I call (people) to Allah with full perception, both I and my followers. Pure is Allah; and I am not among those who associate partners with Allah}. (Yusuf: 108)

﴿ فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ * لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ ﴾ (الغاشية: ٢٢-٢١)
 {So, (O Prophet,) keep on preaching; you are only a preacher* You are not a taskmaster set up over them}, (Al-Ghashia: 21-22)

﴿ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴾ (يونس: ١٠٨)
 { Say, :O people, the truth has come to you from your Lord. So, whoever accepts guidance accepts it to his own benefit, and whoever goes astray does so to his own detriment. And I am not responsible for you}. (Yunus: 108)

﴿ ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بَالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ... ﴾ (النحل: ١٢٥)
 { Invite (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good counsel. And argue with them in the best of manners...}. (Al-Nahl: 125)

﴿ وَإِنْ جَادَلُوكَ فَقُلْ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ (الحج: ٦٨)
 (And if they dispute with you, say (to them), :Allah is the best aware of what you do) (Al-Hajj: 68)

When the Holy Prophet SW arrived in Medina, the Jews had already been living there, but he SA never ordered to expel them. He let them live there and this is clear from the treaty he signed with them. Just like Muslims of Qureish, Yathrib and his followers, they joined him and went to Jihad with him just like a united nation. Bani Ouf Jews are a nation with the believers, Jews have their own religion and Muslims have their own, unless someone commits oppression, such a person persecutes only himself and his family. Jews must win their own livelihood and Muslims must do their own, and they must help each other against those who fight in opposition to this treaty; they must advise each other and be good to one another, without committing any sin. (Al-Ghazali, Al-Sheikh Muhammad, 1976, 196)

On the foundations of monotheism, Islam was revealed to give freedom to human beings and set them free from worshipping and servitude of idols and because of this, it doesn't let them give up the principle of freedom and indulge themselves in the earthly servitudes and worshipping idols. In addition to the fact that Islam does not consider monotheism as something related to the private life of individuals as the western civilizations do, it considers monotheism as the basic principle of all its civil identity. Also Islam cannot let any violation of its main principles with the excuse of non-religiosity or disbelief in God. The goal of the Holy Quran through its divine verses is rejection of compulsion in religion by considering needlessness of compulsion, so that the right path is distinguished from the wrong path, as long as the light of the path is bright and the proof is upright, and as far as the difference between darkness and light is clear for every human being who is really after truth and light.

In addition to that, we claim that it is impossible that there could be compulsion in religion, because religion is not only the words on the tongues or rituals where force can be applied, but it is a belief, an ordinance and a path in thoughts and ideas, and such an issue can never be entered into one's heart forcefully.

It is from this very viewpoint that we find out why Islam has never forced the people under its domain to accept this religion. This behavior has practically taken place in dealing with non-believers and the People of the Book, and Islam has never made them accept it. On the contrary, it let them live in coexistence under the Islamic government and practice their rituals while following the determined conditions and in return to paying tribute to the Islamic government according to the determined rules.

Thereupon, human beings have the religious freedom about what they believe, without being under any form of compulsion. This is quite natural that selecting a religion under the influence of compulsion has no validity because the place of belief is heart and conscience; and if whatsoever tongue speaks, is not originated from the heart and out of satisfaction, is valueless.

Islam respectfully regards freedom of faith for all people and lets non-Muslims practice their customs and rituals under public expedients. It gives them freedom of doing their rituals in such frameworks, that is why Muslims cannot commit any aggression to these places, their workers or worshippers, either in the time of peace or war, nor even while conquering a place. There are so many letters of Rashideen Caliphs to the commanders of Islamic armies emphasizing non-aggression to holy places of non-Muslims or to their workers.

Islam is clear and it has strong reasons for its truth so that there is no need to force anyone to accept it, but everyone with common sense will automatically follow it without compulsion and his deeds are with his own will and he is not obliged to do them. That is why, we see that the prophets have never fought people to make them follow their faiths. Similarly, the prophet of Islam didn't fight elders of Qureish or Jews in order to impose Islam on them, but he fought them for other reasons.

We can easily see that because of symbiosis and respect in Islam, non-Muslims, too, could achieve many things in the Islamic governments. Most important one of these achievements were respect to their faiths, freedom to practice their rituals, non-oppression on them, freedom of trade, settlement, owning property along with support to their lives, dignity, and properties. Why not? While the Islamic *sharia* has determined peace and friendship as a way of life among the members of the society and wants that relationships between human beings remain on the basis of mutual respect and non-aggression. This is testimony of this saying of the Holy Quran:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ...﴾ (الحجرات: ١٣)
 { O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into races and tribes, so that you may identify one another. Surely the noblest of you, in Allah's sight, is the one who is most pious of you...} (Al-Hujurat: 13)

The Quran and Islam insist on freedom, thereupon, they use humanitarian solutions for it and have maintained human dignity in it; because of this freedom in Islam has risen from wonderful justifications and instructions of the Quran. The Quran has established freedom of ideas, freedom of faith and freedom of expression. In the field of ideas, Islam pays special attention to freeing mind from fancies and superstitions. The Quran addresses human mind and originates the biggest monotheistic subjects from it so much that it encourages applying mind and freeing ideas. It criticizes a person who does not apply his mind and ideas and imitates others:

The important characteristic of the Holy Quran is its establishment of the strong principles and basics in order to strengthen the structure of belief in Islam. This Quranic feature is the very spirit of ideological respect and symbiosis whose objective is not dominating minds by deceit and deception. Its objective is not to conquer minds by compulsion and force, but it gives the chance to all minds and intellects, regardless of their different levels and natural or achieved differences, to understand the truths that scientific and instinctive talents provide for it so that it finds peace with them and its mental chaos and agitation gets settled with it.

Nevertheless, the essence of faith in Islam- which is the biggest phenomenon of its symbiosis and magnificence- is the simple real belief that minds do not struggle much to digest it. Its facts are not farfetched and it stands away from complication and vagueness. It stands without deceit, fear or secrets. (Arjun, Muhammad Sadiq, 1, 626-627)

The Islamic belief includes security, peace and stability and is based on pillars and principles which God the Owner of Glory and Eminence has sent down in his stable book and the Holy Prophet SW has stated that. Islamic belief is the belief of love, brotherhood, symbiosis, forgiveness, elevation and glory. Briefly, it includes plenty of virtues as well as a lot of planning in the social life and even personal lives of individuals at home, in private affairs or in the individual's self. Islamic belief has not left a single issue, except it has revealed its benefit and stated its loss. It is the faith of love, peace and friendship; and in the meantime, it is the faith of power.

The Essence of Freedom of Beliefs

The First Essence: Human Dignity

Clearly, God Almighty has given mankind dignity and has given a lot of characteristics to him so that they can have the qualification to take responsibility and trust; on the other hand, accountability and trust cannot be achieved except by following the right path, relying on moderation and justice, and keeping away from dispersal. Dignity and glory, too, cannot be achieved except with moderation and cannot be maintained except with it. Therefore, God Almighty says:

﴿وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ...﴾ (الاسراء: ٧٠)
 {And We bestowed dignity on the children of 'Adam...} (Al-Asraa: 70)

Human beings can never apply the grandeur and dignity God Almighty has given to them except in the light of a system based on justice and moderation; therefore, mankind should know the value of this dignity and should be grateful to God because of it.

In *Freedom of Beliefs in the Light of Islam*, it reads: "considering dignity of human beings as a principle in correlation with him and regardless of color of skin is proved for every human being. One of its examples in *sunnah* is that when a dead was being taken before the Prophet SW, he stood up. He was told: Oh Messenger of God, it is a Jew's dead body! He replied:

Is it not a soul?

They replied: Yes" (Al-Omar, Tayseer Khamis, 214, Al-Bukhari 108/2, Muslim, 81)

The Second Essence: diversity among people is a genetic tradition

Diversity of nations is a divine and authentic tradition. It is the very goal and will of God Almighty; therefore, difference of ideas and intellectuals is a real and undeniable fact. Because of this, in the realm of beliefs, freedom to choose is given to human beings so that on the one hand, it becomes accordant with the

tradition of testing that God Almighty has put for examining mankind; hence, freedom of selection is given to mankind. God Almighty says:

﴿...فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ...﴾ (الكهف: ٢٩)
 { ... whoever so wills may believe and whoever so wills may deny...}. (Al-Kahf: 29)

﴿وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۗ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ﴾ (هود: ١١٨)
 { Had your Lord willed, He would have made all the people a single community. But ,they will continue in their differences}. (Hud: 118)

God Almighty addresses his messengers and tells him:

﴿وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا ۖ أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ (يونس: ٩٩)
 { Had your Lord willed, all those on earth would have believed altogether. Would you, then, compel people, so that they become believers?} (Yunus: 99)

Third Essence: Originality of Values of Justice in the Believer's Soul

Justice and the love for justice is planted, as a value, in the souls of believers. It is authentically placed in their selves. Its concepts have roots in the principle and in the great source which the Holy Prophet SW has followed and God Almighty has ordered. Therefore, a Muslim does not oppress, does not help oppressor, never makes anyone do something he doesn't want to do, and does not skip his rights. It is narrated from Jabir ibn Abdullah that the Holy Prophet SW said:

«اتَّقُوا الظُّلْمَ، فَإِنَّ الظُّلْمَ ظُلُمَاتٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.»

"Stay away from oppression that oppression is darkness of the Day of Judgment"

(Narrated in Muslim, No. 2578, 1996, 4, and Bukhari, in Adab Al-Mufrad, No. 383)

The Fourth Essence: Unaccountability of Believers for Other People's Deeds

After a sufficient and rational discussion in the best possible way, if the enemies still deny faith, the other believers are not accountable for their deeds. In this case, the issue is left to God Almighty in the hereafter. God Almighty says:

﴿وَإِنْ جَادَلُوكَ فَقُلْ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾ (الحج: ٦٨)
 { And if they dispute with you, say (to them), :Allah is the best aware of what you do}. (Al-Hajj: 68)

He also addresses his Messenger SW in this regard and says:

﴿فَلَيْدَلِكَ فَادْعٌ ۖ وَاسْتَنْعِمَ كَمَا أَمَرْتُ ۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ ۖ وَقُلْ آمَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَأَمَرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ ۖ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ ۖ لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ ۖ لَا حُجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۖ اللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا ۖ وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ﴾ (الشورى: ١٥)

{ So, (O prophet,) towards that (faith) invite (people), and be steadfast as you are commanded, and do not follow their desires, and say, :I believe in whatever book Allah has sent down. And I have been ordered to do justice among you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. For us are our deeds, and for you, your deeds. There is no argumentation between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is the final return} (Ash-Shura: 15)

Therefore, we can see these communicational borders that the Islamic faith has placed between its believers and the believers of other faiths. Its principle is like this: "Our deeds are for us and your deeds are for you". Then if they deny, do not accept this principle, try to stop us from practicing our faith and say: "our deeds are for us and your deeds are not for you", it is here that there remains no alternative but defending our rights in order to take back our usurped material or spiritual rights; otherwise, satisfaction of agreement with them is nothing but surrendering before them.

The Omnipotent God has prescribed specific rules and regulations for believers of every faith so they can practice them. They are the ways they live according to, and through them, they worship God Almighty. Therefore, the non-believers in the tribe of the Holy Prophet SW should not stand against him regarding this religion. God invites his Prophet to stand firm and be patient on this faith and tells him: "Oh Prophet, stay firm on your religion and do not dispute with them; keep inviting towards your lord as you were ordered, since you are in the right and direct path of your Lord and the faith that leads to success and prosperity. If those non-believers insist on discussion and dispute, then turn away from them and tell them: God knows your deeds better. Dispute and argument is useful with hearts that are ready to be guided not with hearts that insist on the wrong path."

It can never be denied that in Islam, freedom of religion is guaranteed for all believers; that is why God Almighty has not sent Muhammad SW as but a proof, a warner and an inviter towards God with his permission and a bright light. His message for people is public and after clarifying the truths of faith and exposing fancies of paganism, debauchery and rebellion, it is limited to preaching. Not the Prophet neither any other person can violate the rules and limits of preaching and propagation. In this way, Islam stabilizes the source of human freedoms in faith which is, of course, the most important principle among the principles of Islam. The place of belief is heart and no one dominates hearts except the creator of skies and earth and that is between them and their inwards. (Al-Mot'eni, Abdul-Azim Ibrahim, 1996, 50)

Islam urges this Islamic society to be easygoing and forgiving towards its own people, codes, customs and traditions as well as towards others, and in order to reach this, there are many motivations and means which can be collected in three points:

First: authentically, Islam condemns prejudice in whatever form it appears and dignifies human beings as they are, regardless of their gender or religion. God Almighty says:

﴿وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ...﴾ (الاسراء: ٧٠)

﴿ And We bestowed dignity on the children of 'Adam'. (Al-Asraa: 6)

Second: Islam invites towards recognition and familiarity. It invites towards coming together, coexistence, exchange of benefits and expedience in trade, and eternal influencing or getting influenced without national, racial or local prejudices or even cultural pride. In this way, it regards no one superior to others except on the basis of piety. God SW says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ...﴾ (الحجرات: ١٣)

﴿ O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into races and tribes, so that you may identify one another. Surely the noblest of you, in Allah's sight, is the one who is most pious of you...﴾ (Al-Hujurat: 13)

Both Familiarity and introduction require the strength to do so and its outstanding point is to admit difference of ideas and diversity of beliefs.

Third: this is originated from the fact that discrepancy lies in the very nature of the world and the nature of all creatures. It testifies this saying of God Almighty:

﴿وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۗ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ﴾ (هود: ١١٨)

﴿ Had your Lord willed, He would have made all the people a single community. But ,they will continue in their differences﴾. (Hud: 118)

Therefore, this means that God Almighty's tradition in this world is built upon difference and diversity of human beings either on gender, language, or any subject among the subjects related to civilization and culture. In this way, Islam considers everything as following the orders of Allah and the in hidden secret in it; and also God emphasizes on this will and its requirements i.e. not imposing faith on people. He Almighty says:

﴿وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مِنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا ۖ أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ (يونس: ٩٩)

﴿ Had your Lord willed, all those on earth would have believed altogether. Would you, then, compel people, so that they become believers?﴾ (Yunus: 99)

Truly, this verse of the Holy Quran shows that if God Almighty wanted, he could give people the same levels of understanding religion. In fact, freedom in Islam has a specific position which does not exist in other faiths. It also has simplicity and easiness in accordance with mind and logic.

According to *Islamic Moralities and Its Principles*: "freedom has limits. There is no absolute freedom for any creature and talking about it is nothing but a superstition. Absolute freedom only belongs to the one who has the authority to create and command. It is he who is able to do anything. However, according to his wisdom, he never does anything except the action that there is some good in it; and with the will that contains absolute freedom, he never chooses anything unless there is some good in it. He has written mercy for himself and has forbidden oppression for himself, and has obliged himself to take care of the affairs of his servants. Despite the fact that no creature has any right on its creator, God Almighty has considered some rights on himself for his servants. (Hanbaka Al-Meidani, Abdul-Rahman, 151)

In this saying of God Almighty, it comes:

﴿وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ...﴾ (الانعام: ٥٤)

﴿ When those who believe in Our verses come to you, say to them, :Peace on you .Your Lord has prescribed for Himself mercy...﴾ (Al-An'am: 54)

In a divine *hadith* narrated by Imam Muslim from Abuzar and by him from the Holy Prophet SW, God Almighty says:

"يَا عِبَادِي إِنِّي حَرَّمْتُ الظُّلْمَ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِي، وَجَعَلْتُهُ بَيْنَكُمْ مُحَرَّمًا، فَلَا تَظَالَمُوا..."

"Oh my servants, I have forbidden oppression to myself and have forbidden it among you too; so do not oppress one another..." (Muslim ibn Hajjaj Abu Al-Hussein Al-Ghashiri Al-Neishaburi, research: Muhammad Fuad Abdul-Baqi, hadith No. 2577, 4, 1994)

Freedom of mankind for fulfillment of his desires or interests is dependent on the reality of weakness and inability which he is chained to. Abilities of man- how much transcendent and superior- are not enough for him to fulfill all his imaginary wishes, even if the field of life is laid before him and all opportunities for achieving personal freedom are provided for him, because the right of personal freedom is naturally bounded whether man wants or not. (Hanbaka Al-Meidani, Abdu-Rahman Hassan, 152-153) There is no doubt that rights have limits and when every right exceeds its limits and gets out of its circle, is considered as enmity and oppression.

The Islamic Attitude to Freedom of Religion

In Islam, freedom of religion is secured. This means that no human being should ever be forced to believe in a faith which he does not want to believe in. However, we had better mention the fact that if someone

turns into a religion other than Islam, he will not survive the punishment of his creator in the time of judgment of all mankind; this does not mean that we Muslims believe that denying Islam by others is allowed, but the meaning of non-compulsion in following Islam is that Islam is the only religion in which if someone thinks deeply and uses his intellect and heart, he will realize that it is the truth and Muslims should invite people towards Islam through non-violent ways. (Othman, Muhammad Rafat, 1991, 85-86)

In Islam, the real freedom is related to people's faith and dignity by which God Almighty values them. It consists of cleanness of heart from any form of slavery and from any form of servitude except servitude of God Almighty. The freedom of will and selection, as it is on the basis of the servant's nature and need, has no discrepancy with commitment to what religion has made compulsory, because heart's movement is in search of truth and such a thing cannot be achieved except in the light of guidance from revelation. The concept of freedom here means freedom of heart, will and ability to do something. Freedom of heart is servitude of no one but God. Freedom of will and choice includes most important heartily deeds, because servitude to God takes place with free will and choice. In addition to the fact that we are according to the nature and needs of his servants, and this very fact is one of the most important deeds of a bright heart filled with the light of faith in the one and only God, freedom and will are the duties of mind to which revelation has given shape in both forms; therefore, mind and free will in the Islamic imagination always come together because of their relationship with accountability and reward.

To move forward alongside this perspective of freedom makes a believer's life happier and coordinates it with an elevated picture which God Almighty has preferred for modernizing life of mankind against the eternal rules of genesis which dominate the universe. It is here that man's freedom becomes coordinated and coherent with laws of universe and divine traditions in the nature of genesis and nature of man himself. Then, man's choice with free will reforms his life in the framework of these traditions; otherwise, divine traditions never delay, but they definitely pass their routes. (Ibn Thabet, Said ibn Ali, 1991, 30)

So, the point is that the Holy Quran approves of this precise understanding of the concept of freedom. It is stated by Islamic scholars, as mentioned in the Quranic signs and divine traditions in the lives of individuals and groups.

The religion of Islam brought real freedom for mankind. It dissuaded people from worshipping other than God and bestowed total freedom of thoughts by getting them state what is in the conscience after purifying the service to God who is truly worthy of worship. Because of this, Islam is the mediating point between slavery in the age of ignorance and the true freedom upon which the Holy Prophet SW brought up his companions and has prevented them from praising him – although he is innocent from sins- he warns them:

﴿إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ، إِذَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّن دِينِكُمْ فَخُذُوا بِهِ، وَإِذَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّن رَّأْيِي، فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ﴾

"I am but a man; if I order you with something of your religion, take it; and if I order you on the basis of my opinion and view, then know that I am but a man" (Narrated by Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 2362, part 38, 4, 1835)

God Almighty expresses the nature of connection and propagation and says:

﴿إِنَّمَا أَمِرتُ أَنْ أُعْبِدَ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الْبِلْدَةِ الَّذِي حَرَمَهَا وَلَهُ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ وَأَمِرتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ* وَأَنْ أَتْلُو الْقُرْآنَ فَمَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ﴾ (النمل: ٩٢-٩١)

{ I am but ordered to worship the Lord of this city, which is sanctified by Him .And to Him belongs everything, and I am ordered to be one of the Muslims (who submit themselves to Allah* and to recite the Qur'an; so whoever takes the right path, takes it for his own benefit. As for the one who goes astray, say (to him), :I am only one of the warners}. (An-Naml: 91-92)

In this verse, respect to freedom of man and his will and also to his mind and dignity is mentioned. Therefore, human beings are not like a herd of sheep only following ideas and principles, but they should receive proper propagation so that people accept the faith of belief in God alone through persuasion and free choice.

In this sense, freedom is a basic idea in the nature of mankind and in the Islamic teachings it is counted as one of the requirements of individual and social life; therefore, man can have real life with it and can be free in this world and hereafter and will be responsible for his deeds. It is the belief in deity of one unique God that has laid the basis of true freedom because it has worked on genesis and organizing individuals and the nation. It has stated the truth of divinity and the truth of connection between creator and creature. Divinity is specific to God Almighty and everything except him participates in servitude to him, either on the basis of nature or on the basis of need. This is something shared between all creatures, as it is mentioned in the Quran:

﴿إِنَّ كُلَّ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتِي الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا﴾ (مريم: ٩٣)

{ There is none in the heavens and the earth, but bound to come to the All-Merciful as a slave}. (Maryam: 93)

This return can be out of free will and choice which is specific for the believing human beings. When a believer says "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger", he bears witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except God and this bearing witness means willful binding to total submission before the one and only God and rejection of submission and obedience to other than him. This servitude is half of the

first pillar in the monotheistic faith, and the other half is taking and receiving the teachings of the Holy Prophet SW.

﴿قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾ (آل عمران: ٣١)

﴿ Say (O Prophet): :If you really love Allah, then follow me, and Allah shall love you and forgive you your sins. Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful﴾. (Al-Imran: 31)

Hence, in the Islamic teachings, freedom requires pure servitude to God; and as a part of this freedom, freedom of media requires media owners not to keep silent so that they can win God's satisfaction, to tell the whole truth and do not keep silent unless for the sake of winning God's satisfaction. It might be that someone is unable to do good deeds or to deny bad deeds but confesses superiority and virtue of a person who has done good deeds and has ordered to justice and truth, while he heartily dislikes disbelief, debauchery and disobedience. Then, if this hatred goes away, his nature has been diverted and the light of faith has left his heart. It is then that man loses his true freedom because he has lost his faith.

The Holy Prophet SW says:

«من رأى منكم منكراً فليغيره بيده فإن لم يستطع فبلسانه فإن لم يستطع فبقلبه وذلك أضعف الإيمان» و في رواية: «وليس وراء ذلك من الإيمان حبة خردل». Every one of you who sees a bad deed, then he change it with his hand; if he couldn't, then with his tongue; and if he couldn't, then with his heart and that is the weakest degree of faith" and in another narration, it says: "and after that, there is no faith even the size of a mustard".

This is the point where we can understand the importance of freedom of expression in Islam. This freedom is related to the most outstanding issue which is the pure belief of monotheism. It means purity and cleanliness from every bond and tie; it makes man servant of his creator, and man struggles for his satisfaction. Then, when man sets himself free from servitude of other than God and from his lusts, then he finds true freedom and dignity. It is only then that he can courageously have access to information and will be trustful about the truths, understanding them and their interpretations.

CONCLUSION

As every free, thinking and reasoning human mind can find out, Islam is just another version of the divine religions sent by Creator of the whole universe. It satisfies the struggling human soul in its quest for harmony, peace, eternity, freedom, etc. Symbiosis, patience and respect to other people's rights, feelings and beliefs, alongside having harmonious relationships with them, are the means to facilitate this quest. The most basic idea in all mainstream divine religions is surrender to one and only God and to live according to His will. Servitude to Almighty God requires a free will. It is because of this, as we find out, that Islam rejects compulsion in the beliefs of people, promotes coexistence and respect so that thoughts and beliefs should be free, and that every form of forcing man, scaring him or threatening him to join a religion, sect or ideology is invalid and unacceptable; because that belief has not entered his heart and cannot be placed in his conscience.

The Holy Quran in its mentioned verses and the *hadiths* of the Holy Prophet SW has strongly and directly mentioned these points, has laid the foundations of faith on the five pillars which all invite towards unity, coexistence, helping others and respect even to the opponents. Islam takes it very easy regarding the followers of other religions. It lets mankind look at the book of existence which is full of various truths and different phenomena living together in amazing harmony. It invites him to experience them with his mind and gives him the chance to benefit from them in favor of his coexisting fellow human beings, because whatever exists in the universe is at the service of mankind and mankind exists to serve best his creator. Serving the creator is nothing but service to other human beings as well as other living things including animals and even the greenery. This can never be achieved except with deep thinking and having a highly expansive perspective.

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