

"In the Latter Days, the sun shall rise from the West"

Holy Prophet Muhammad(Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)



LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR

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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as)



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

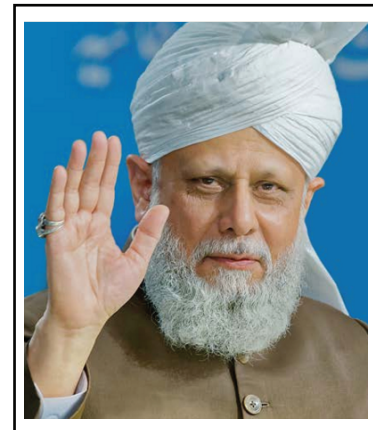
The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 207 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjab province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah).

The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity.

Hazrat Ahmad (as) proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qura’nic teaching:

“There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257).

It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason. After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah (as).



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad,
Khalifatul Masih V (aba)

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The Muslim Sunrise

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Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (ra) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the Muslim Sunrise, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever-changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presents their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

The Muslim Sunrise welcomes letters to the Editor, Questions and Submissions.

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaihis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allahu anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.



Acronyms for salutations used in this publication

- sa: Sallallāhu 'Alaihi Wa Sallam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)
as: 'Alaihis-Salām (may peace be upon him)
ra: Radhi-Allahu 'Anhu/'Anha (may Allah be pleased with him/her)
rh: Rahimahullāhu Ta'ālā (may Allah shower His mercy on him)
aba: Ayyadahullāhu Ta'ālā Bi-Nasrihil-'Azīz (may Allah support him with His mighty help)

Verse numbers in the references from the Holy Qur'ān count Tasmiya at the beginning of a chapter as the first verse.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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FROM THE HOLY QUR'AN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①

وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا
وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ
وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ
وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ۗ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۗ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا ۗ ②

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

And worship Allah and associate naught with Him, and show kindness to parents, and to kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbour that is a kinsman and the neighbour that is a stranger, and the companion by your side, and the wayfarer, and those whom your right hands possess. Surely, Allah loves not the proud and the boastful.

The Holy Qur'an, (4:37)

HAQIQA

SAYINGS OF THE

PROPHET MUHAMMAD (sa)

Hazrat 'Abdullah bin 'Amr (ra) relates that the Messenger (sa) of Allah said: "The best of the companions in the sight of Allah is he who behaves best towards his companion, and the best among the neighbors is he who behaves best towards his neighbor."

(Tirmidhi Kitabul birr Wassilah)

Hazrat 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud (ra) relates that a man asked the Messenger (sa) of Allah, "How can I judge whether I am doing a good or a bad deed?" The Holy Prophet (sa) said, "If your neighbors say, you have done good, then certainly you have done a good deed but when you hear them saying that you have committed an evil, then definitely you have committed an evil."

(Ibn Majah Abwabuz Zuhud)

Hazrat Ibn 'Umar (ra) and Hazrat 'A'ishah (ra) relate that the Messenger (sa) of Allah said: "Gabriel kept exhorting me about the neighbor till I thought he would include him amongst the heirs."

(Bukhari Kitabul Adab)

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

FALL 2016

Loving your Neighbor' is a central virtue common among all faith traditions of the world. But the question: 'Who is my neighbor?' has many diverse answers. Usually a neighbor is seen as the one who lives next door; but these days being a member of the global human family, he or she could be living anywhere in the world, and still considered a neighbor. With the passage of time, as the social environment in various parts of the world is constantly changing, the concept of loving your neighbor is re-adjusted frequently. People living in small villages think of a neighbor differently than those who live in continually expanding cities with high-rise apartment buildings. And those among us who are globally connected through up to date technology, their 'neighbors' are not merely people living close-by. In addition, it is not only individuals or religious congregations that are called neighbors; countries with adjoining borders also come under the definition of neighbors. Hence, the vitally important question - 'Who is our neighbor in modern society?' is dealt with in this issue of the Muslim Sunrise.

Keeping in view the changing concepts of 'neighbor', we are also presenting articles and discussions concerning the difficult proposition of how to love our neighbor – what are the main hurdles in the way, and how to overcome them! The perspectives of four major world religions – Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam -- are presented on the theme of 'Love your Neighbor'. Vedanta teaches that the same Divine consciousness is in everyone; therefore, the concept that humans are 'separate' from each other should not exist. The Jewish experience of suffering brings them close together. The Torah teaches the Jews to love even those who are foreigners, for they were once foreigners in Egypt. Christianity is based on the concept of love, and 'Love thy neighbor' is fundamental. Islam places great emphasis on proper treatment towards one's neighbors. The article on the Islamic perspective explores verses of the Holy Qur'an that clearly state what is expected of all Muslims in their conduct towards their neighbors, and analyzes the impact of this behavior on both local and global levels.

Opinion is also expressed on the important question: Can neighboring Muslim countries live in peace? We envision that Muslim countries of the Middle East will continue to be a tinderbox if they persist along the paths being followed today. These countries are populated by nomadic tribes, sections that have turned to extremism, and a few very rich and powerful families that have benefitted from the discovery of oil. Contrary to the teachings of Islam, some of these autocratic and corrupt governments suppress their people and facilitate terrorist organizations. Countries in the midst of extreme violence and upheaval are, by and large, the ones who also sponsor hatred towards the West.

Naturally, in our definition of 'neighbor', we also include neighbors who are the followers of different religious groups living in physical proximity. The importance of interfaith dialogue cannot be underestimated when seeking to establish love and understanding between the followers of diverse religious traditions. In this issue of the Muslim Sunrise, therefore, the need for interfaith dialogue is also discussed, and that leads to the question: How to enjoy unity in diversity?

Please, read and enjoy. As always, your opinion and critique are welcome!

Mubasher Ahmad
Editor-in-Chief

IN THE WORDS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH^(as)

How to Treat Your Neighbors

In the words of the Promised Messiah (as)

“Whosoever deprives his neighbor of the very least good in his power, he is not of my community. Whosoever has no wish to forgive the faults of others who may have transgressed against him, and desires to nurse malice, he is not of my community.” (Our Teaching, page 16)

“The principle to which we adhere is that we have kindness at heart for the whole of mankind. If anyone sees the house of a Hindu neighbor on fire and does not come forward to help extinguish the fire, most truly I declare that he does not belong to me. If any one of my followers, having seen someone attempting to murder a Christian, does not endeavor to save him, I most truly declare that he does not belong to us... I say it on oath and in truth that I have no enmity with any people. (Siraje Munir, pp.28; Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 12)

“As much as possible, our community should take great care to attend the funeral prayer of someone who passes away. And one should be sympathetic to his neighbor. All these matters are among the rights of people. I notice that there is still weakness in attaining the teaching and the status that God the Exalted wants us to have. It should not be a mere claim that we have faith. We should try to achieve that measure of faith that God wants us to possess. It is not easy to comprehend the rights of brothers and of neighbors. No doubt it is easy to say by the word of mouth that we know what their rights are, but to show true sympathy and love as a religious obligation is not that easy. The reality is that for all movements and actions the faith is like an engine. When there is faith then all the rights automatically start being realized; and a person starts on his own performing acts of enormous virtues and sympathy. The seed of faith keeps on growing slowly; but it is not destined for everyone.” (Malfoozat, vol. 6, page 107)



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as)
The Promised Messiah and Mahdi

The keynote address

Delivered by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad
Khalifatul Masih V
February 20th , 2016

Mosques are Built to Serve the Neighbors

New Ahmadiyya Mosque opened in Leicester, UK, by the Head of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The highlight of the event was the keynote address delivered by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad on February 20th, 2016, during which he explained the true purposes of Mosques and highlighted the importance of fulfilling the rights of neighbors in light of the teachings of Islam.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“According to the 2011 Census, Leicester remains one of the UK’s most ethnically diverse cities. Indeed, I read that recently Narborough Road in Leicester was officially recognized as the most ethnically diverse road in the entire country. In my opinion, this should be considered as a badge of honor for this city and is evidence of Leicester’s successful model of integration and inclusiveness. These are qualities that should never be forsaken or disregarded.”

“As we are currently living in extremely precarious times, wherein much of the world is increasingly consumed by disorder and injustice, it is the critical need of the time that we promote and spread the tolerant values that this city has epitomized for so long. We must all work towards uniting society under the umbrella of humanity and seek to foster a spirit of mutual respect for each other’s values and beliefs.”

His Holiness further said that the fact that Leicester is home to various religions and beliefs further enriches the city and “increases its beauty and attraction”.

Elaborating upon the true purposes of Mosques, His Holiness said a Mosque is a place for Muslims to congregate in order to

worship the One God and to fulfill the rights of God’s Creation.

“I am confident that every Ahmadi Muslim who comes to worship here will not only seek to fulfil the rights owed to Allah the Almighty but will also seek to fulfill the rights owed to the neighbors of this Mosque and indeed the wider community. Thus, there is no need to fear this Mosque because only sentiments of love and compassion towards our neighbors will reverberate and echo in every direction from here.”

Referring to the motto of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, His Holiness said:

“You will see for yourselves that our motto of ‘Love for All, Hatred for None’ is not just an empty proclamation or a hollow slogan.”

have great sympathy. Such cruelty perpetrated on them was going to agonise us as indeed it did. Not only were they Pakistani like most of the people sitting in the congregation but they were also Muslims. Also, this incident exceeded all manner of barbarity.



His Holiness said in light of the true teachings of Islam the actions of those so-called Muslims who perpetrate cruelties are therefore “indefensible and entirely unjustified”.

The Khalifa said that the need for mankind to join together for peace is more critical now than ever before.

“We must unite in our efforts to promote peace and mutual understanding, so that the world can be saved from that horrific destruction, in the shape of a catastrophic world war, that seems to be drawing ever closer by the minute. In the past, the people of this city came to learn the benefit of peace and tolerance after living through warfare and violence. Thus, I pray that the lessons of the past are enough for us to realize our responsibilities to safeguard our future.”

Addressing the local Ahmadi Muslims, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“I also wish to say to the Ahmadi Muslims who are living here that they should seek to portray the true teachings of Islam at all times. Their conduct and character should always remain exemplary. They should always remember that if they fail in their duties to serve others, then their worship will neither please Allah, and nor will it prove of any benefit to them. Nor will there have been any benefit to having built this Mosque.”

Concluding, His Holiness said:

“God Willing, this Mosque will come to be known as a beacon of light that illuminates its surroundings and will come to be known as a true symbol of peace in Leicester. May Allah enable the local Ahmadi Muslims to fulfill the true purposes for which this Mosque has been built. Ameen.”



This address is reprinted exactly as released by the Ahmadiyya Press & Media desk

The Holy Qur'an on Taking Care of Neighbors

Mazher Ahmad

﴿وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي
الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ
الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ
أَيْمَانُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا﴾ (36)

“Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor farther away, the companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful.” (1)

The Holy Qur'an outlines the simple but powerful guidance for how people should look after one another, in particular those whom they consider to be neighbors. In a world where hate and intolerance appears to be the prevalent sentiment of the day, this verse lays the foundation of the expectations of treating one another (even neighbors we may not know) in a positive, compassionate manner. By laying these expectations on people, Allah has provided guidance for creating more harmonious relationships at the personal, community, and global level.

It is important to note that the Holy Qur'an lays out the concept of the neighbor by actually beginning with the fundamental tenant of Islam, namely worshipping Allah and not associating any partners with Him. By focusing on this primary concept, Allah reminds man that before he can treat others with respect, he must treat God with respect. Man must control his own ego and submit to the will of the All Powerful. Only after one completely understands unity of Allah, and submitting to this concept, that a person is instructed to do good to others including relatives and obscurest of strangers.

If we ask ourselves, why did the Holy Qur'an lay out with such specificity, the need to do good to neighbors, putting them almost on par with one's own parents and close relatives. It becomes evident that Islam has placed great emphasis on creating harmonious bonds at all level of

human relationships, beginning with those closest to us. Once a seeker has developed a close relationship with Allah through the act of worship, that individual can then begin to fulfill his obligations to serve and do good to the people around him. If we ponder on the wisdom of this simple directive on both the micro and macro levels, the implications are astounding.

In the United States, for example, the vast majority of citizens live in communities where they are in close proximity to other individuals, with studies showing that over 80% of Americans live in urban or suburban settings versus more isolated rural environments. (2) Unlike other homogenous nations, the United States, considered to be the melting pot of the world, is the home to communities and neighborhoods with people from wide ranging cultures, ethnicities, and religions. It was the intention of the founding fathers of the nation to create a society where all people were provided with equal rights and could live together in harmony. The unfortunate reality of American history, however, has proven that the disparity between race, income, and education has often driven gaps between individuals and has led to tensions at the community level.

Take for example, what the US is currently experiencing, with tension rising in many communities between white law enforcement officials and African Americans. This tension, as seen in American cities such as Baltimore, Dallas, Baton Rouge, and many other communities across the country is rooted in a multitude of factors. At the heart of many of these issues, however, lies the fundamental issue of lack of a desire to do good to one another. Rather than following this golden rule of “do unto others as you would like done to you,” (3),(4) we see too often people assuming bad intent from one another, which leads to suspicion of motives, and ultimately a disintegration of trust. Although it is very difficult to do, if one does shift the mindset from “why is my neighbor acting the way they are?” to “what can I do to help my neighbor?” - the broader shift in harmonious human relations can also begin. As the Holy Qur'an states, it is not just about being kind to one's neighbor, but it is about doing good for one's neighbor, which implies that one cannot simply talk about doing good, but must actually engage in activities that show this outreach is genuine and sincere.

In many communities and neighborhoods today, fear has driven more and more people into isolating themselves. Safe behind the confines of their homes, cell phones, and other technologies, people have reduced their overall human interactions with those who live in closest proximity. This shift in human behavior continues to perpetuate the challenges we face in breaking down misunderstandings about each other's beliefs and ideologies. It is through human dialogue and interaction that people connect and learn about each other. The Holy Qur'an's guidance encourages people to help one another, and through acts of service to each other break down these silos. By being good to neighbors, a feeling of genuine love and harmony emerges within people, who often will return the favor.

As we continue to consider the depth of wisdom of the Holy Qur'an's teachings, the treatment of neighbors moves from doing good to those who are near as well as those who are farther away. The concept of a neighbor can, therefore, be extended beyond our micro level communities to a more global world view. Extrapolating the guidance from these teachings, the expectation can be laid at the international level, that nations and world leaders should also be lending a helping hand to neighboring countries. If we consider the global political and economic climate, we are seeing these basic tenets being employed by large scale global non-profit organizations and government agencies like United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Red Cross, Humanity First, and many others. The underlying concept that the Qur'an has laid out calls for more support for these types of institutions not just during times of crisis, but on an ongoing basis. The movement to relieve third world debt is an example of wealthy nations showing mercy and doing good to their neighboring less fortunate nations. Although progress is being made, lot more work remains to be done to truly achieve the desired state as laid out in the Qur'an.

It is important to also consider that the above quoted verse of the Holy Qur'an concludes by discussing Allah's displeasure towards those individuals who are self-deluding and boastful. When taken in the context of this verse, we begin to understand that the root cause of poor treatment towards neighbors is often grounded in the fallacious belief that we are somehow better than others. Whether this perspective arises from level of wealth, education, family heritage, or a myriad of other social or psychological factors, the Holy Qur'an quickly invalidates this mindset. Connecting back to the fundamental belief, Islam has laid out is that all people are created equal in the eyes of God, any hint of arrogance or showing that one is superior over another is immediate grounds for incurring Allah's displeasure.



The concept of how we treat our neighbors with a service mindset and egoless approach also enables one to enhance leadership qualities. Whether we are leading a family, an organization, or simply ourselves, the basic concept of eliminating boastful thoughts, and not deluding ourselves into thinking we are more important than our neighbor (be it a colleague, employee, student, or supervisor), will inevitably lead us to live a more purposeful and meaningful life. Too many times we see leaders feel like they have to prove their self-worth by denigrating others.

In conclusion, the above quoted verse from the Holy Qur'an is full of wisdom and guidance for how we can create harmonious and peaceful communities at the personal, local, and global level. Some of humanity's greatest world leaders including the prophets of God themselves, began exemplifying this behavior and as a result created ripple effects that impacted their closest neighbors as well as those residing in far off lands. By focusing on our individual behaviors and attitudes towards our neighbors near and far, we can start to make our world more peaceful and harmonious. It is a simple concept, and if followed without any ulterior motives, can have significant implications in improving race relations as well.

Mazher Ahmad is a strategic business advisor to Fortune 500 companies, and is actively involved in public affairs and social justice volunteer work. Mazher holds an MBA from the University of Chicago, and a BA from University of Pennsylvania, and currently resides in Morristown, NJ with his wife and two children.

References:

- (1) The Holy Qur'an (4:37)
- (2) <https://ask.census.gov/faq.php?id=5000&faqlid=5971> (Accessed: August 6, 2016)
- (3) Luke 6:31
- (4) Matthew 7:12

Rights of Neighbors

in Light of the Sayings of the Holy Prophet (sa) Muhammad

Dr. Khaula Shah

On the 14th of July this year, the peaceful town of Nice woke up to a nightmare of mayhem and terror. Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, a Tunisian resident of France, deliberately drove a nineteen ton cargo truck into the crowds celebrating Bastille Day on the Promenade des Anglais in Nice, killing eighty-four and injuring three hundred and three people. Thirty of the eighty-four killed were Muslims, reflecting the demographics of the people celebrating the French National Day or Bastille Day, as it is more popularly known.

Nice is the fifth largest city in France with a population of almost one million. Islam is the second-most widely professed religion in France behind Catholic Christianity. There are almost seven million Muslims in France, the largest number in Western Europe, an estimated five to ten percent of the national population. All the people living in these areas, regardless of their faith, are neighbors to each other.

Lahouaiej-Bouhle's actions did not reflect the teachings of Islam by any stretch of the imagination. Islam places great importance on the rights of neighbors. There are countless examples in the words and actions of the Holy Prophet of Islam(sa) that make it abundantly clear that neighbors are to be treated with utmost respect and kindness.

Abu Hurairah (ra) relates that the Holy Prophet(sa) once called out: By Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe. He was asked: Who does not believe, Messenger of Allah? He said: He whose neighbor is not secure against his mischief. (1)

The above Hadith clearly condemns the type of violence committed by Lahouaiej-Bouhlel.

In fact, the father of Lahouaiej-Bouhlel said of his son, "He didn't pray, he didn't fast, he drank alcohol and even used drugs." So, if we carefully search for the truth, there was plenty of evidence that he was not a practicing Muslim.

His father also said that he underwent psychiatric treatment before he moved to France. (2) He married a French-Tunisian cousin, living in Nice, with whom he had three children. According to his wife's lawyer, he was repeatedly reported for domestic violence and the couple separated. (3)

He was an angry, violent, disturbed man who happened to be born in a Muslim family.



Abdullah ibn Umar (ra) relates that the Holy Prophet (sa) said: 'The best companion in the sight of Allah is he who behaves the best towards his companions, and the best neighbor is he who behaves the best towards his neighbors.' (4)

The Holy Prophet (sa) also said:

"Whoever wishes to be delivered from the fire and to enter paradise should treat other people as they wish to be treated themselves." (5)

And:

"Do unto all men as you would wish to have done unto you; and reject for others what you would reject for yourself." (6)

And:

Abu Shuraih Khuza'l (ra) relates that the Holy Prophet (sa) said: 'He who believes in Allah and the Last Day should be benevolent towards his neighbor; he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should honor his guest; he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak beneficently or should keep quiet.' (7)

There is a Hadith: "Your neighbors are 40 houses ahead of you, 40 houses to your back, 40 houses to your right and 40 houses to your left." (8)

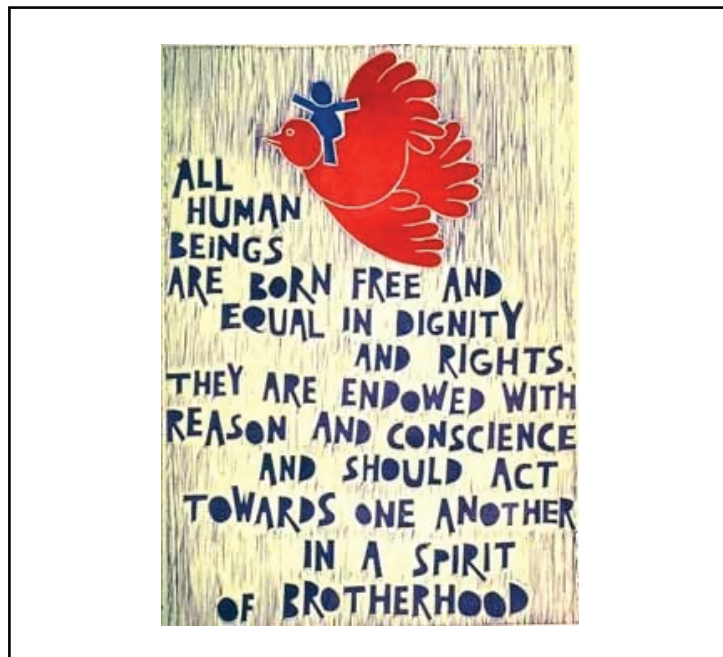
Charity certainly begins at home and there is something to be said for one who is an immediate neighbor versus one who is far removed. Ayesha (ra) relates that she asked the Holy Prophet (sa): "I have two neighbors; to which of them shall I send a present? He said: To the one whose door is nearer to yours." (9)

The Prophet Muhammad (sa), may peace be on him, lived in a tribal society, however as his message spread far and wide, his teachings took on a larger universal and global tone. His circle of compassion and brotherhood also expanded in the same way. One year before his death he addressed an unprecedented crowd of more than a hundred thousand people at the time of the final pilgrimage, an event that itself symbolizes human equality. On this occasion he spoke of universal brotherhood and a global circle of compassion, "All of you are equal. All men, whatever nation or tribe they may belong to, and whatever station in life they may hold, are equal. Allah has made you brethren one to another, so be not divided. An Arab has no preference over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab; nor is a white one to be preferred to a dark one, nor a dark one to a white one." The whole of his sermon is recorded in history and has been cherished in the Muslim world, over the centuries. Any study of the life of the Holy Prophet (sa) will reflect the importance placed on his final words by all Muslims.

With the development of science and technology we have seen gradual shrinkage of distances. In the past centuries a neighboring village may have seemed a different world but now we get to hear about the plight of people from every nook and corner of the world instantaneously thanks to social media, Facebook and Twitter.

In the same vein the meaning of a neighbor has changed over the centuries and now in a manner of speaking every member of the human race is a neighbor to every member of the human family.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, of all places in Paris, France, on 10 December 1948.



The first two articles of the Declaration state:

Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. (10)

John Brockman describes the new paradigm of growing circle of human compassion created by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the following words:

"Moral improvement can be understood in terms of what the philosopher Peter Singer calls 'the expanding circle.' People have steadily expanded the mental dotted line that embraces the entities considered worthy of moral consideration. The circle has been poked outward from the family and village to the clan, the tribe, the nation, the race, and most recently (as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) to all of humanity. This expansion has happened for a number of reasons. As people in more parts of the planet become economically interdependent, the hatred between them decreases, for the simple reason that you can't kill someone and trade with him too. Our sympathy response can also be cranked up by new kinds of information demonstrating that other folks are similar to ourselves. Words and images from erstwhile enemies can make it impossible to continue to believe that they are subhuman." (11)

Now the whole of humanity is neighbor to each other and to paraphrase one of the above quoted Ahadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa), Abu Hurairah (ra) relates that the Holy Prophet (sa) called out: "By Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe. He was asked: Who does not believe, Messenger (sa) of Allah? He said: He whose fellow human beings are not secure against his mischief." (12)

Therefore, Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel is not a believer and every French man or woman, whether a Muslim, Christian, Jew, agnostic or an atheist, is a neighbor of all of us in the USA and elsewhere, and a brother or a sister for whose grief and loss we all mourn.

This is the meaning of being a good neighbor in the 21st century in light of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (sa) that have been conveyed to us across the span of 1400 years.



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Brotherly Love Between the Helpers of Medina and the Immigrants from Mecca

Dr. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal

The Bastille Day killer or terrorist in Nice, France, Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, described by ISIS as a "soldier of Islam," ploughed a 19-tonne lorry into holiday crowds, killing 84 innocent people and injured 300, who were participating in the celebrations of French National Day or Bastille Day, which is celebrated on July 14th of each year.

"He took drugs and used dating sites to pick up men and women," Telegraph UK reported. (1)

The father of Bouhlel, the Nice Bastille Day killer, said of his son, "He didn't pray, he didn't fast, he drank alcohol and even used drugs." (2) Piecing together the information given by his father, his neighbors and the officials investigating him, it seems that Bouhlel was not a devout Muslim. Yet the official French position, including that of the president and prime minister, on Bouhlel's motive was exactly the same as for every act of violence recently perpetrated by any Muslims, it was an act of "radical Islam."

As a result, there were more threats of resolute military action against the culprits, more security measures, more surveillance, and more public demonization of Muslims. Akbar Ahmed, Chair of Islamic Studies at American University, wrote in a wonderful analysis of the situation in France, "'Security,' 'terrorism' and 'counter-terrorism' experts, thriving in the hot market of ideas on how to tackle 'Islamic radicalism,' poured out from every nook and cranny, their bread and butter secure in the continuous Muslim mayhem, to write and talk of Quranic verses that encourage violence, of the mental make-up of the so-called 'jihadis' and 'Islamic radicals.'" (3)

Bombing the Middle East, however damaging to the Islamic State, will not defeat terrorism in Europe. Instead, successfully integrating and assimilating Muslims here at home in the West is the most viable solution.

Javier Solana, Ex Secretary-General of NATO and Foreign Minister of Spain and currently President of the ESADE Center for Global Economy and Geopolitics penned his opinion on the Europe's immigration issue in his article "Europe's Jihadi Generation" published in Project Syndicate in 2015.

"Immigrants are susceptible to the blandishments of terrorist organizations because European citizenship has not translated into social and economic inclusion. If anything, growing inequality – exacerbated by years of crisis – is making the prob-

lem worse." And he adds, "People need hope. They need to believe in a vision, a project that promises a better future for them and their communities. European countries once offered that sense of hope. But the crisis, and the official response to it, has replaced hope with frustration and disillusionment." (4)



Europe may learn and benefit from the teaching presented by the Holy Qur'an and put into practice by the Prophet Muhammad (sa) and his companions.

Before migration of Muslims from Mecca to Medina took place, the Holy Prophet (sa) would try to make contact with parties arriving from other parts of the country. On one such occasion he met 6 people from Medina and explained to them the message of Islam. They accepted Islam. Next year 12 people came from Medina, met Prophet (sa) and accepted Islam.

When the season of the pilgrimage came again, a large Muslim delegation from Medina, including two women, met the Prophet and assured him that not only were people in Medina ready to receive and give shelter to their brethren in faith from Mecca, but that they were very eager and would be greatly honored to receive the Prophet himself if he decided to immigrate to Medina. (5)

Ten to thirteen years into the Prophet's ministry, mounting persecution in Mecca made life increasingly unbearable for the Muslims. The Prophet of Islam under the Divine guidance decided to migrate from Mecca to Medina. He migrated to Medina with his most trusted companion, Abu Bakr (ra). Other Muslims from Mecca followed suit as situation permitted.

At the time of his migration from Mecca to Medina, in a tribal society of the early seventh century, he successfully integrated the Muslims from Mecca known as the Muhajireen or the immigrants with the Muslims of Medina, known as the Ansar (helpers) - locals.

The Holy Prophet (sa) said:

"A believer to another believer is like a building whose different

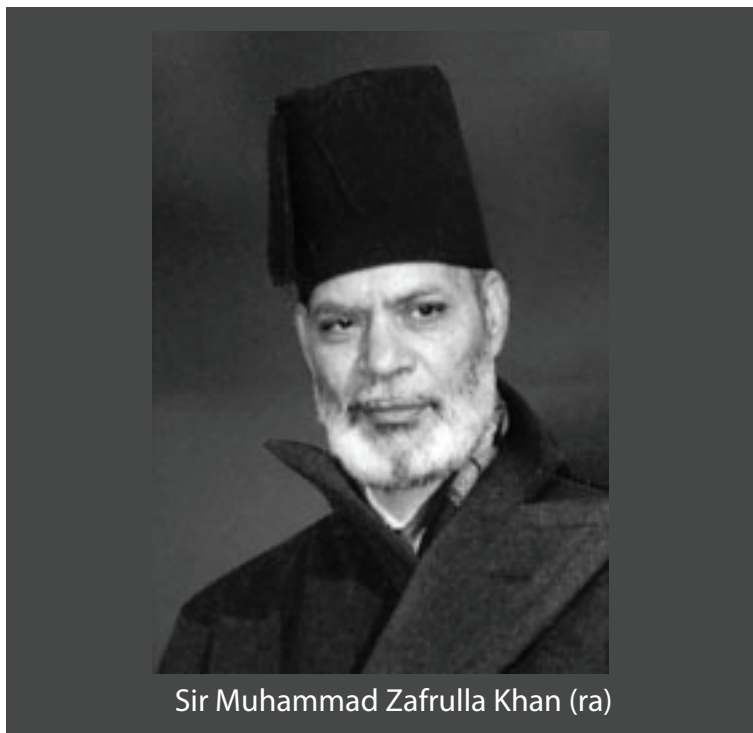
parts enforce each other." The Prophet then clasped his hands with the fingers interlaced to demonstrate the model of love and coexistence. (Bukhari)

In the context of global village today the term believer in the Hadith should be understood as every member of the human family.

The Prophet also said: "By God Who holds my life in His Hand, none of you can be a truly faithful Muslim, unless he liked for his brother what he liked for himself." (Bukhari)

The secret to integrating the Muslims in Europe lies in developing mutual understanding, love and compassion between the locals and the migrants, rather than fanning the divisions and the differences.

How did it play out in the time of the Holy Prophet (sa) between the Ansar and the Muhajireen?



Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan (ra)

In his biography of the Prophet Muhammad (sa) entitled "Muhammad: Seal of the Prophets," Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan explains:

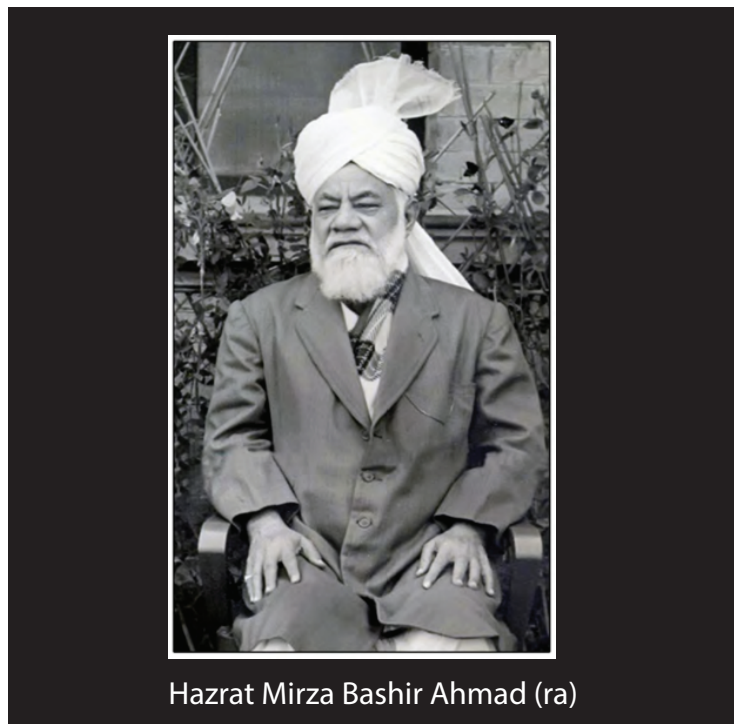
"The Emigrants were generally poor, as even those who had been well off in Mecca had left all their belongings when they migrated. Ansar entertained the Emigrants very hospitably and held back nothing from them. The Holy Prophet adopted a plan to strengthen further the bond of brotherhood between Emigrants and Ansar. He called them together and established a special bond of brotherhood between one Emigrant and one Ansari, and in this way about ninety persons truly became pairs of brothers, one from Emigrants and one from Ansar. This bond

of brotherhood proved in practice stronger than real brotherhood. Ansar offered to share their orchards with their Emigrant brothers, but as the latter were not trained in gardening or agriculture, Ansar were content to carry on with their gardening and horticulture, etc., but shared the produce equally with their Emigrant brethren. This system continued till gradually Emigrants built up their trade and businesses and acquired properties of their own, so that they could dispense with the help of Ansar."

In this system of brotherhood, it was also provided that on the death of an Ansari brother, his Emigrant brother would be entitled to a part of his inheritance. This system of brotherhood continued over a couple of years, till it was abrogated under divine direction.

This was a unique plan, which proved of great beneficence, over a crucial period, for the small but daily growing community of Muslims in Medina. Emigrants were not only provided with economic aid under it, but were consoled and comforted to a large degree in the strange and helpless condition in which they found themselves on arrival in Medina. They began to feel at home and a strong sentimental bond was forged between them and their brethren in Medina which welded them into one united community." (6)

Hazrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad (ra) gave an excellent narrative of relationship between the Ansar and the Muhajireen in his book "The Life and Character of the Seal of Prophets." Even though the Ansar were keen to help out, the Muhajireen wanted to be self-sufficient and tried hard to stand on their own two feet as soon as they could:



Hazrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad (ra)

“The Muhajireen in Medina were generally in a state of complete destitution, because the indigent were of course in a difficult state, but even the wealthy Muhajireen migrated, generally leaving all of their wealth and property behind. The Ansar treated them with even greater kindness than blood brothers. Nevertheless, in order to further strengthen this relationship of brotherhood, the Holy Prophet (sa) proposed that all of the Ansar and Muhajireen gather at the home of Anas bin Malik (ra). Taking mutual suitability into account, the Holy Prophet (sa) established a formal bond of brotherhood between ninety people, more or less. The love, sincerity and loyalty with which both parties acted upon this brotherhood puts to shame even the blood brotherhood of today. What to talk of brotherhood, these Ansar and Muhajireen were as if two parts of the same being. Presenting themselves before the Holy Prophet (sa), the request made by these Ansar after this relationship of brotherhood had been formed was that, ‘The Holy Prophet (sa) should divide our orchards between our brothers and us.’ However, the Muhajireen were generally merchants by profession, and they were completely inexperienced in agriculture. As a matter of fact, the people of Mecca did not even like this work. Therefore, the Ansar themselves proposed that, “We shall manage and work on these orchards, but the Muhajireen will receive a portion of its profit.” As such, this continued until the businesses of the Muhajireen, which they had taken up in Medina, began to flourish, and they also developed their own properties, and the assistance of the Ansar was no longer required. Hadrat ‘Abdur-Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) was made a brother to Sa’d bin Ar-Rabi’ Ansari (ra). Sa’d (ra) calculated all of his wealth and property and presented it to ‘Abdur-Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra). In the fervor of his love, he even said that, ‘I have two wives. I shall divorce one, and when she completes her prescribed

period, you can marry her.’ This was the fervor of love expressed uncontrollably by Sa’d (ra), for both knew that this was not possible. Hence, ‘Abdur-Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) thanked him and prayed for him saying, ‘May Allah make all of this blessed for you, just tell me the way to the marketplace.’ As such, ‘Abdur-Rahman bin ‘Auf (ra) began to do business and since he was a remarkably intelligent and prudent man, slowly his business prospered, and ultimately he became a very rich and wealthy man.” (7)

Addressing the concerns on both sides and drawing insights from the success of Medina model can genuinely help assimilate the 40 million Muslims that live in the Western Europe today.

Javier Solana may not have read the story of the success in Medina some 1,400 years ago, but, he is suggesting some very similar solutions. He wrote for the Arab News:

“While intelligence services and police forces must be engaged to prevent attacks, devising an effective strategy to counteract extremist movements requires, first and foremost, understanding what drives them. Western countries must go beyond defending freedom of speech and improving police coordination to develop lasting solutions that address adherents’ economic and social marginalization, while avoiding cultural confrontation and reliance on repression alone.

More fundamentally, such solutions require abandoning the false dichotomy of liberty and security. If security concerns trump basic rights and freedoms, fanaticism will have scored a victory; and the same thing will happen if expressions of Islamophobia and xenophobia increase.” (8)

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Who is our Neighbor in Modern Society?

Anser Ahmad, Esq.

From the Jewish principle of helping a neighbor with his burden, to the Christian belief of loving thy neighbor, to the Islamic injunction of showing kindness towards neighbors, every faith instructs its followers to care for their neighbor. However, in order to practice these valuable lessons taught in each of these great faiths, it is essential to first define what constitutes a "neighbor." Has the definition of neighbor changed over time? Is a neighbor limited only to those within our local communities? Or do our neighbors now encompass larger groups of society and even other countries?

According to Webster dictionary's definition, a neighbor is "a person living near", or "a place in relation to others that is near." Therefore, a neighbor can be both a person, and a place, such as a neighboring city or even country. Furthermore, with globalization and the rapid growth of technology, the modern definition of those that are "near" is vastly different than what it once was. A neighbor, today, no longer refers to our neighbor down the street, but also to people of neighboring races, cultures, and countries.

Long ago, the Holy Quran, predicted a time, when "people are brought together." (1) Whereas a mere decade ago we only had to look outside to see our neighbor, nowadays, we can view the daily activities of countless acquaintances and people through various electronic means. Our neighbors are no longer limited to those within close physical proximity but now encompass those to whom we are connected; those that influence our lives; and those to whom we can provide aid even from a great physical distance.

Refugees from Neighboring Countries

The last two decades have seen a vast migration of people fleeing war, natural disasters, famine, and failing economies. Most often these people migrate to neighboring countries. This influx of impoverished neighbors, the vast majority of whom are from Muslim countries, has created a crisis of both economy and security for many host nations. This has led to a growing fear of possible terrorist attacks in the host countries. Currently there is a vigorous debate in western countries, as well as neighboring Muslim countries over whether these neighbors should be permitted to enter.

The great American poet, Robert Frost, explored this issue in his poem "Mending Wall", which depicts a discussion between two neighbors who are reconstructing a stone wall between their properties. While Frost proclaimed that "something there is that doesn't love a wall" his neighbor countered, by stating "good fences make good neighbors." Frost however does not agree with his neighbor's opinion. He suggests:

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.

For Frost, the idea of drawing boundaries is much deeper than simply raising a wall, as his ancestors did. He is more concerned about the purpose of building boundaries, and who may be offended by such boundaries.

President Ronald Reagan, similarly believed that to properly handle the issue of fencing our neighbors out, we should understand the problem: He stated, "I think the time has come that the United States and our neighbors—particularly our neighbor to the south—should have a better understanding and a better relationship than we've ever had. But I think that we haven't been sensitive enough to our size, and our power. They have a problem of 40 to 50 percent unemployment. Rather than talking about putting up a fence, why don't we work out some recognition of our mutual problems, make it possible for them to come here legally with a work permit, and then, while they're working and earning here, they pay taxes here. And when they want to go back they can go back, and cross. And open the border both ways, by understanding their problems." (2)

The importance of taking care of our neighbors should never be underestimated. In this regard, countries should exercise empathy and understand the difficulties faced by neighboring countries. If care of neighboring countries became a paramount concern for all nations, then the horrific situation that is being faced by countless Syrian refugees would not exist. If the Quranic injunction of caring for one's neighbor had been implemented, the world would, without a doubt, be a safer and more peaceful place. (3) Ironically, the selfish desire of many nations to close their borders on the basis that this offers protection from those that may want to harm

them has proven to be counterproductive.

Historically, many of the great prophets were refugees and sought protection with their neighbors. Prophet Moses (as) when he was excommunicated from Egypt sought refuge among the Arabs, Prophet Jesus (as), after the crucifixion attempt, also escaped and sought refuge in the lands of Kashmir in India. Likewise, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa), after thirteen years of persecution at the hands of the Meccans, sought refuge among the neighboring town of Medina. Had it not been for the generosity and compassion of these neighboring peoples, these messengers of Allah would not have been able to spread God's message.

As for America, this country was founded on the principle of offering a safe haven to refugees. Among the first settlers were the pilgrims, who were fleeing religious persecution from Great Britain. Many other groups followed, entering the United States as refugees, including the Irish, Italians, Jews, and more recently Bosnians, Rwandans, and Ahmadi Muslims. These refugees, having been given a second chance, made significant contributions to their new homeland. America is known as "the Land of Opportunity" and it does not limit anyone from following their dreams and fulfilling their God-given potential. Had it not been for America offering a safe haven to these refugees, they may not have prospered as they have.

There is a great difference in the consequences experienced by countries that accept immigrants and integrate them into their society (such as the USA and Great Britain have done), and countries such as France that continue to segregate those of different cultures. Countries that segregate, either overtly or covertly, are not following the precepts outlined for the treatment of neighbors. What follows, is distrust, disdain, and sometimes, blatant hatred on both sides. We have seen how in the last ten years a growth of Islamic fundamentalism in France is increased dramatically. According to the Sun, a UK based newspaper, over 1,000 homegrown (French) Jihadis have fled France to fight in Iraq and Syria. The article explains the cause of this radicalization:

"Experts say young Muslims are being radicalized because of simmering racial tensions in ostracized communities where youth unemployment is high."

And

"A perceived state of war against organized religion... has stoked resentment and provided a twisted justification for bloodshed at home." (4)

This isolationism and segregation is especially dangerous for the youth who see no hope for their future. Another example

is the "iron dome" constructed by Israel. Its sole purpose has been to ward off attacks from their Palestinian neighbors. However, after decades of maintaining this barrier, has it benefited either side? The Israelis continue to live in fear, and even now, suicide bombers and missiles manage to enter its borders. Likewise, the wall has created a generation of hostile Palestinian youth, who are bent on entering and killing their neighbors, even with stones and knives. Likewise, the hatred among Israeli soldiers for their Palestinian neighbors is equally strong.

On the other hand, if we examine countries such as Germany and Canada, which have the highest rate of acceptance of refugees, we see how these countries have prospered financially through the influx of talent and the financial contribution by refugees to these countries' economies. More importantly, these countries are among the least harmed or disliked. Furthermore, the good will, and moral affirmation that Germans and Canadians have gained is incomparable. Not only are the refugees thankful for the generosity shown, but also, the rest of the world continues to applaud their policies.

Even in the United States, foreign-born residents who have recently been provided refugee status are estimated to contribute almost \$19,000 more in tax receipts each decade than they consume in government benefits. (5) Since the September 11 attack, the US has accepted 745,000 refugees from around the world. (6) Not one of these refugees has been arrested on domestic terrorism charges. This means that refugees are less likely to engage or attempt to engage in domestic terrorism than ordinary American citizens. This conforms with other research indicating that immigrants are 80% less likely to be incarcerated than native citizens. (7)



These legitimate reasons to accept refugees cannot be discounted. Refugees have been shown to make our society safer, they pay their own way and even contribute a net surplus in tax revenue, and they help many people become conscientious and act in accordance with their religious and moral principles.

Local Neighbors Whose Beliefs and Lifestyles Differ from Our Own

Just as the treatment of neighbors from different countries (i.e. "the neighbor who is far") remains a sensitive issue, so is the treatment of the neighbor that is close by. In each country, we are witnessing growing internal conflict between people of differing religions, economic status, and ethnicities. These clashes are apparent in movements in America such as 'Back Lives Matter', 'Occupy Wall Street', 'LGBT', etc. All of this conflict and suffering stems from a basic human need to be treated with dignity and compassion. These movements have become so forceful that they are causing serious upheavals in government and in society. This illustrates how important it is to understand and show kindness to neighbors of differing beliefs, especially in modern society.

As the American author Eric Hoffer states, "It is easier to love humanity as a whole, than it is to love one's neighbor." (8) For those people that prescribe to a different belief system, what are the duties we owe to those living in our communities? Are we to ignore our neighbor down the street or in our apartment complex because he or she has different beliefs or a different lifestyle? Or do we have a greater responsibility for their well-being?



"It is easier to love humanity as a whole, than it is to love one's neighbor."

When asked by one of his followers, what was the greatest commandment in the law, the Prophet Jesus Christ (as) said, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these.' (9)



This shows, that in the eyes of the Prophet Jesus (as), the commandment to love one's neighbor was second only to the commandment to believe in one God. In fact, the commandment is so powerful because it not only requires us to love our neighbor, but to love them as we love ourselves. There are no conditions to be placed on this love. Jesus (as) did not specify only the neighbor of the same faith or race, but anyone who is a neighbor. In today's society, according to Prophet Jesus (as) this would include those who may be atheist, homosexual, or even those who have a criminal past.

Similarly, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) stated, "One is not a believer whose neighbor is not safe from his actions," (10) meaning that in order to do justice to one's neighbor, the neighbor must at all times be made to feel safe and secure. If our neighbor who lives down the street, feels that we do not like them, or we look down upon them, or that we may harm them, it is our responsibility, not theirs, to mend these walls. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) emphasized that it is our obligation to make sure that our neighbors feel safe, not only from our actions, but also from our speech, and even our thoughts. Research in the field of psychology has shown that each person sends out waves of energy to those around them, and hence the other can sense how those in proximity may feel about them. This is especially true with neighbors. How often when we come across a neighbor as we enter or leave our home, do we get a sense of what our neighbor thinks of us? Likewise, our neighbor can feel our energy, whether it is negative or positive.

Therefore, in order for our neighbor to feel completely secure from us, we must change not only our conduct and speech towards them, but our deeply rooted fundamental beliefs and prejudices as well. The best manner to accomplish this is through education and open communication with those around us.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our prosperity, security, and well-being is not independent of our neighbors. If a neighboring country, a physical neighbor, or even a distant neighbor is in distress, their suffering will not and cannot be contained behind a wall. Whether it is a border wall or a brick wall that separates us from our neighbor, history has shown that when those who can help, ignore the needs of others, it only leads to misery for the very people who thought they were protecting themselves. After all, there may come a day when we are in need of our neighbor's aid. We should treat them the way that we would wish to be treated if the situation was reversed.

Likewise, showing kindness and affection to the neighbors in our local communities, while inculcated by every faith, is easier said than done. If we are to truly put into practice what is taught by our respective religions, then we must get to know the neighbor who is of a different race, ethnicity, religion, or gender-preference, and empathize with him or her. Only then, will we be able to overcome the barriers that separate us from our neighbors: by building bridges of enlightenment where there once were walls of ignorance.



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Neighboring Muslim Countries: Can They Live in Peace?

Mobashir Ahmed

Having peaceful relations with other countries is as important as good relations between groups inside a country. Countries with positive external relations are more peaceful and tend to be more politically stable, have better functioning governments, are regionally integrated, and have low levels of organized internal conflict.

It is a sad and well-documented fact that the majority of Muslim states today are afflicted by conflicts and violence of varying levels and intensities. The worldwide opinion propagated by Islam's adversaries is that Muslims are inherently imbued with violence due to their faith and to their culture.

At first glance, it appears that most Muslim conflicts are local: Cairo, Damascus, Benghazi, Baghdad, Karachi, Istanbul- these conflicts stem from local, political, social, sectarian and externally imposed disputes. They extend their original boundaries when left unresolved. Even after emerging from colonial and foreign rule, ordinary people remained quiescent under the oppressive rule by their elite and dictatorial leaderships. However, the rise of public expectation unleashed by inequality, poverty, suppression of freedom and injustice, appears almost impossible to put back into the authoritarian bottle. It also yields a period of turbulent transition. Stability will only make its mark in these countries through clear political direction and immediate economic growth.

Ethnic conflicts are another cause of deep unrest within Muslim states: The Kurds across Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria have remained a source of tension and discord; the competing loyalties among the Pashtuns and Baloch in Pakistan, and similar ethnic conflicts in other Muslim nations, create difficult governance of these peoples.

Another key disturbing factor of conflict in the Muslim world is ever expanding sectarianism. Violence between Sunni Muslim and Shia Muslim communities dates back to long before the Islamic revolution in Iran. Soon after, the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan supported by Pakistan, the USA, Saudi Arabia, and others, saw the rise of Sunni Muslim militancy.

Today, Shia Muslim force wielded by Iran, Iraq, Alawite Syria, and Hezbollah in Lebanon, is applied against Sunni Muslim states - Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Egypt - in

the battle for Syria.

Several decades ago, the cause of Kashmir enjoyed equal billing with that of Palestine. Today, even Pakistan stays away from mentioning the "K" word in the United Nations Organization. And yet Kashmir will continue to see violence and human atrocities.

The Middle East, long a place of instability, is especially turbulent nowadays. This uneasiness is not concentrated in any one country, or for common reasons. Extremism, political turnover, faltering oil prices, and the age-old sectarian tensions are inflicting casualties in different ways in different places with alarming regularity. A few countries own the doubtful privilege of standing out, due to the unique and intractable challenges they face:

Yemen

The government is in shambles. Violence—some of it sectarian, some of it al-Qaeda driven in the Arabian Peninsula, has been raging for years. How will Yemen's weak government become functional under various unfolding crises? If Houthis take the lead, it would mean Shiites ruling a country that is predominantly Sunni Muslim. And none of this is any solace to the average Yemeni stuck in poverty, with little efforts focused on improving his economic situation.

Saudi Arabia

Since its founding, Saudi Arabia has been one of the most stable and wealthiest countries in the world. However, the same cannot be said of its neighboring countries which are sadly in disarray with their own conflicts. These conflicts may well spill over into Saudi Arabia, including the threat from across the Persian Gulf in Iran. On top of that, the price of its economic driver has plummeted over 50%. It is much too early to tell whether the newly-crowned King Salman can be an effective leader throughout the region. Will he try to broker peace between Palestine and Israel, or will he be able to exert any influence in keeping Yemen under control?

Syria

Syria's upheaval began in 2011 with protests in the streets. Bashar Assad responded with a deadly crackdown which only fueled the unrest and developed into a full-fledged civil war. The United Nations Organization estimates nearly

200,000 Syrians have been killed as of a year ago and at least 6.5 million more displaced. There is no single united opposition group fighting against Assad, there are instead more moderate fighting groups, and extremists who have been able to attract recruits, gain considerable influence, and control the key swath of territory amid this chaos. One of them is Al-Nusra which is active in Northeastern Syria. Another is ISIS, who emerged in Iraq but gained a second life in Syria, establishing a de facto capital in the Syrian city of Raqa'a and branding itself as the "Islamic State." Its terrorist activities have forced neighboring countries like Turkey and Jordan to accommodate swarms of Syrian refugees.

Besides the refugee issue, the endless civil war will emasculate all civilities worldwide, and the human toll will become insurmountable.

Iran

Iran's revolution took place in 1979. While it seemingly imparts a calm picture of internal stability, Iran's relations with the rest of the world have not been so calm. This is due in large part to Iranian leaders' hard line stance against Israel, and a not much kinder one towards the United States, with harsh criticism of policies decided in the U.S. capital of Washington D.C. Iran's nuclear program has continually caused concerns that the country's plans are not simple energy development, rather, the intention to develop nuclear warheads that could strike Israel, and beyond. This dispute has led to major sanctions on Iran, hurting that nation's economy and further isolating it from the rest of the world.

While every leader in Iran is embracing peaceful rhetoric, the ongoing mistrust over Iran's nuclear intent prevails as a source of contention.



Conclusion

Some initial conclusions can be drawn from the question of whether Muslim countries can live in peace:

- Non-Muslim intervention in a Muslim conflict is unlikely to prove successful in the long run.
- Muslim states need to overcome the sectarian and ethnic divisions.
- Economic and social development is essential to resolve most Muslim conflicts.
- While peace is intimately tied with justice, one cannot be achieved without the other.

The relevant verse from the Holy Qur'an addressed to the Muslim communities is as follows:

"O ye who believe! Be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is aware of what you do." (1)

Toward this end we must emphasize promoting Islamic ethics in order to, mediate, to resolve, and to prevent various conflicts. The Qur'an constantly uses the word 'Sulha' in resolving all types of conflicts. It means seeking peace, reconciliation, compromise, and settlement.

In his historic address, "Pathway to Peace - Just Relations between Nations"(2), delivered at Capitol Hill, Washington D.C., in 2012, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) explained in detail how Islam has drawn our attention towards various means for peace, including peace between countries. Muslim countries, too, would be well-advised to take heed "It requires absolute justice. It requires truthful testimony to always be given. It requires that our glances are not cast enviously in the direction of the wealth of others. It requires that the developed nations put aside their vested interests, and instead help and serve the less developed and poorer nations with a truly selfless attitude and spirit. If all of these factors are observed, then true peace will be established. If despite all these aforementioned measures any country transgresses all limits and attacks another country, and seeks to unjustly take control of its resources, then other countries should certainly take measures to stop such cruelty—but they should always act with justice when doing so. The circumstances for taking action, based on Islamic teachings, are detailed in the Qur'an (3). It teaches that when two nations are in dispute and this leads to war, then other governments should strongly counsel them towards dialogue and diplomacy so that they can come to an agreement and reconciliation on the basis of a negotiated settlement. If, however, one of the parties does not accept the terms of agreement and wages war, then other countries should unite together and fight to stop that aggressor. When the aggressive nation is defeated and

agrees to mutual negotiation, then all parties should work towards an agreement that leads to long-standing peace and reconciliation. Harsh and unjust conditions should not be enforced that leads to the hands of any nation being tied, because in the long-term that will lead to restlessness, which will ferment and spread. The result of such restlessness will be further disorder. In circumstances where a third-party government seeks to bring about reconciliation between two parties, then it should act with sincerity and total impartiality. This impartiality should remain even if one of the parties speaks against it. Therefore, the third-party should display no anger in such circumstances, it should seek no revenge, nor should it act in an unfair manner. All which will ultimately lead to a huge destruction. The effects of such devastation and warfare will surely last for many generations."

Finally, the Muslim countries must be awakened from their slumber to serve their designated role as the instrument for Islamic cooperation, and to live in just peace.

Mobashir Ahmed has been involved in the hospitality industry for over 35 years. He founded, operated and successfully sold multiple hotel management companies in the Mid-Atlantic region. He was also a senior executive with Starwood, Richfield, & Marriott in various parts of the country. He was the President/CEO of Potomac Hotel Group and Oceanic Hotels International where he operated national and international hotels. He is currently on the advisory board of Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration and also performing board responsibilities of the University of New Orleans.

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The Hindu Perspective on Loving Neighbors

Dr. Subhash S. Kale
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It is heartening to see that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community wants to collect views of different religions on the teaching of 'Loving Your Neighbors.' Vedanta Society of Greater Houston is honored and grateful for being invited to write about Hinduism's view on this important teaching. In the current turbulent situation in this country, and all over the world, with so much bloodshed going on in the name of religion, race, gender or sexual orientation, etc., the world needs to imbibe and follow this teaching.

Jesus Christ taught his followers to 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.' What does this mean? It means that we should not be selfish and should treat our neighbor the same way we would want to be treated by him or her. One finds many parallels in the teachings of Vedanta, which is based on Hinduism, and the teaching of Jesus Christ, on loving your neighbor. In fact the same can be said of the teachings of Islam, of Judaism, of Buddhism, almost any religion one can think of, with regard to loving neighbors and to showing great consideration to them.

Vedanta gives an explanation for why we should love our neighbor. Loving our neighbor is one of the fundamental essentials for a practicing Hindu who aspires for liberation. One of the basic tenets of Hinduism, is that One Divine consciousness pervades everyone and everything; and the goal of existence is to realize this Truth. Once this Truth is realized, one is liberated from the cycle of birth and death. Since the same Divine consciousness (call it God or any other name) dwells in everyone, the concept of "other" or "you and me" as "separate" should not exist. However, since we are all human beings, our egos can delude us into thinking that other human beings are "separate" from us in various ways and can lead us to have feelings of love or hatred. Of course on the physical plane, we are indeed different from one another, but not at a deeper, internal level. That is what is meant. Seeing the presence of God in everyone is one way of teaching ourselves the essential truth of Divine consciousness. So, instead of seeing our neighbor as a human being, seeing the presence of God in him or her automatically leads to an expression of love toward that person. On the other hand, if Divinity is not seen in the neighbor, it can lead to feelings of anger, jealousy, hatred and other negative thoughts that provoke us to injure him or her. It is natural that one loves oneself and one's family first. As we practice spiritu-

ality and manifest more and more of our own Divinity, we slowly expand our consciousness by expanding our love not just for our family, but for the neighborhood, the village or city, country, and finally, for the whole world.

Swami Vivekananda, one of the foremost direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna (a 19th Century Saint from India), has said that "expansion is life and contraction is death". There is a famous saying in the Maha Upanishad, "Vasudaiva kutumbakam", which essentially means that for those who have expanded their consciousness, "the whole world is but one family; only men of meagre intellect differentiate others, either as one's own or as strangers".

In the Taittiriya Upanishad, one of the oft-quoted verses is: "Matrudevo bhava, pitrudevo bhava, Acharya devo bhava, atithi devo bhava". The meaning is that your mother, father, teacher and guest are all forms of God and should be treated as such. This should be expanded further to include neighbors and all human beings. The goal of each individual is to manifest this Divinity, as Swami Vivekananda has said. This can be done in one of four different ways:

- By performing actions with the spirit of service to God (Karma yoga or yoga of action)
- By dedicating all actions to God (Bhakti yoga or yoga of devotion)
- By deep meditation on the Reality (Raja yoga or yoga of contemplation)
- By discrimination between what is transient (the world) and what is permanent (God) (Jnana yoga or yoga of knowledge).

Any one way, or a combination of the four ways, will ultimately lead us to realize that we are not different from one another and therefore, loving all should come naturally. Hinduism also believes in Karma and reincarnation. Both positive and negative acts done toward another are stored in our "Karma bank". Good Karmas lead to happiness and peace; bad ones lead to suffering. Hence, loving others, treating them with kindness and love, increases our positive account balance, while hatred, anger and jealousy increase our negative account balance, the effects of which may be experienced in this or in future lives. We become responsible for our own fate by our actions and by how we treat others. Clearly it is also in our own best interest to be kind, loving and pure.

Treating Joys and Sorrows of Others as One's Own

In another Hindu scripture, The Bhagavad Gita, which is a dialogue between God (Krishna) and his devotee, Arjuna, several characteristics of a man of Realization (one who is adept in the practice of Yoga, or union with God) are mentioned, and all of them stress the importance of seeing God in everyone. The pronoun "Me" used in these verses refers to the One Divine consciousness and not to Krishna as a person:

"His mind being harmonized by yoga, he sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself; he sees the same in all. (6-29) He sees Me (God) everywhere and sees all in Me, he never becomes lost to Me, nor do I become lost to him. (6-30) He, who established in oneness, worships Me abiding in all beings, that yogi lives in Me, whatever may be his mode of living (6-31). That Yogi, O Arjuna, is regarded as the supreme, who judges pain and pleasure everywhere by the same standard as he applies to himself."

The important teaching in these verses is to look upon everyone as our own and treat them as we would want others to treat us. The motto of the Ramakrishna Mission, of which the Vedanta Society of Greater Houston is now an official branch, is: 'Atmano Mokshartham, Jagad Hitaya Cha, meaning: 'For one's own Liberation and for the welfare of the world.' The Ordinances of Manu also instruct a Hindu never to wound or inflict on anyone any type of injury or pain by thought, word or deed.

Some Examples to Illustrate These Teachings

There are many examples in Hindu devotional texts, such as the Srimad Bhagavatam and Mahabharata, of people who followed these teachings, for example, the story of RantiDeva. The Bhagavatam includes narration of the story of RantiDeva, a staunch devotee of Lord Vishnu, who had undertaken a prolonged fast for spiritual evolution. After many days of fasting, when he was about to break his fast, God wanted to test his devotion and appeared in the form of starving mendicants, begging him for food and water. RantiDeva welcomed them as manifestations of Vishnu and unhesitatingly and lovingly offered them whatever food and water he had. A similar story is given in Mahabharata, where a family of four poor Brahmins sacrifice their lives during a famine to appease the hunger of a guest with some bread they procured with great difficulty.

In modern day life also, there are examples of neighbors caring for one another. We owe our very existence to God, our ancestors, our teachers, our community and

lastly, to all living beings including animals and plants that give us food. Therefore, one of the Hindu customs is to make an offering every day to God, to the teachers or to the enlightened ones, to one's departed ancestors, service to mankind, especially needy ones and guests, and finally to all living beings. This practice expands our hearts and prevents us from being selfish. If more and more people understand and practice these teachings initially on a small scale within their own communities, it would help ultimately to promote friendship among different countries and help to achieve world peace one day.

Conclusion

The idea of 'Loving thy neighbor as thyself' is common to Hinduism and to other religions. The core teachings among all religions have a lot of similarities; only the outer forms and customs vary. Since we all come from the same source, people should learn not only to tolerate but also to accept all religions as valid paths to reach the same goal, as taught in modern times by Sri Ramakrishna. Hence, we should put this teaching into practice in our daily lives and slowly expand our Consciousness to start loving not just our neighbors but increase it gradually to encompass the whole world.

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Jewish Perspective on the Rights of Neighbors

Dr. Zia H. Shah

The planet earth with its circumference of 25,000 miles with a population of 7.4 billion has shrunk into a global village and we are in ever greater need for mutual respect and compassion. In the world of social media, Facebook and Twitter and instantaneous news we are all neighbors to each other.

It is high time that the Muslims should be writing about compassion in Judaism and good things done by the Jewish people and we will soon find the gesture reciprocated by the Jewish writers finding compassion and love in the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith.

The Talmud tells a story of Rabbi Hillel, who lived around the time of Jesus. A pagan came to him saying that he would convert to Judaism if Hillel could teach him the whole of the Torah in the time he could stand on one foot. Rabbi Hillel replied, "What is hateful to yourself, do not do to your fellow man. That is the whole Torah; the rest is just commentary. Go and study it" (Talmud Shabbat 31a).

What Rabbi Hillel so dramatically expressed certainly resonates with what is now popularly known as the Golden Rule, which is an integral part of the ethics of each and every religion of the world. The Golden Rule or law of reciprocity is the principle of treating others as one would wish to be treated oneself. It is a maxim of altruism seen in almost every religion and culture. The maxim may appear as either a positive or a negative injunction governing conduct: One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself or one should not treat others in ways that one would not like to be treated. (1)

The Jewish people had been enslaved for several centuries by the Egyptians and suffered to no end at their hands until they were rescued by Moses (as) who parted the red sea for them on the final route to escape. The Holy Qur'an describes this struggle of Jewish people at length, for example, the Qur'an says:

"And call to mind when Moses said to his people, 'Remember Allah's favor upon you when He delivered you from Pharaoh's people who afflicted you with grievous torment, slaying your sons and sparing your women; and in that there was a great trial for you from your Lord.'" (2)

The Jewish ethic of treating the other, stranger or foreigner among them is grounded in this experience of suffering at the hands of the Egyptians. We read in the Old Testament: "Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt," (3) and "You are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt". (4)

"Many people think of Judaism as the religion of cold, harsh laws, to be contrasted with Christianity, the religion of love and brotherhood" writes Tracey R. Rich in her blog titled Judaism 101. She further adds, "This is an unfair characterization of both Judaism and Jewish law. Love and kindness have been a part of Judaism from the very beginning. When Jesus said, 'love thy neighbor as thyself,' he was merely quoting Torah, and he was quoting the book that is most commonly dismissed as a source of harsh laws: Leviticus 19:18. The point is repeated in Leviticus 19:34: love [the stranger] as thyself." (5)

Leviticus 19 has very extensive teachings on dealing fairly and compassionately towards the fellow beings especially the neighbors:

"Do not deceive one another.

Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

Do not defraud or rob your neighbor.

Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight.



Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD.

Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.

Do not go about spreading slander among your people.

Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the LORD.

Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt.

Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD." (6)

I have written detailed articles about emphasis on compassion in the Qur'an and in the Bible in general: Two Hundred Verses about Compassionate Living in the Quran (7) and A Message of Compassion and Love from the Holy Bible. (8)

The Old Testament is no exception.

In Isaiah 58, God makes his relationship with the Israelites conditional to compassionate treatment of the fellow beings.

These golden words require to be quoted in their entirety:

*"Shout it aloud, do not hold back.
Raise your voice like a trumpet.
Declare to my people their rebellion
and to the descendants of Jacob their sins.
For day after day they seek me out;
they seem eager to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that does what is right
and has not forsaken the commands of its God.
They ask me for just decisions
and seem eager for God to come near them.
'Why have we fasted,' they say,
'and you have not seen it?
Why have we humbled ourselves,
and you have not noticed?'
Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please
and exploit all your workers.
Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,
and in striking each other with wicked fists.
You cannot fast as you do today
and expect your voice to be heard on high.
Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,
only a day for people to humble themselves?
Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed
and for lying in sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call a fast,
a day acceptable to the Lord?
"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.
Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.
If you do away with the yoke of oppression,
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness,
and your night will become like the noonday.
The Lord will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.
Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins
and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings." (9)*

There is a short article about Zionism in Encyclopedia Britannica, which defines it as follows: "Zionism, Jewish nationalist movement that has had as its goal the creation and support of a Jewish national state in Palestine, the ancient homeland of the Jews (Hebrew: Eretz Yisrael, 'the Land of Israel'). Though Zionism originated in eastern and central Europe in the latter part of the 19th century, it is in many ways a continuation of the ancient attachment of the Jews and of the Jewish religion to the historical region of Palestine, where one of the hills of ancient Jerusalem was called Zion." (10) The article describes the history of Zionism briefly starting in the 16th century.

"The strain of suppressing the Arab revolt of 1936–39, which was more extensive and sustained than earlier uprisings, ultimately led Britain to reassess its policies." Encyclopedia Britannica describes the events leading up to the creation of Israel as, "In hopes of keeping the peace between Jews and Palestinian Arabs and retaining Arab support against Germany and Italy in World War II, Britain placed restrictions on Jewish immigration in 1939. The new restrictions were violently opposed by Zionist underground groups such as the Stern Gang and Irgun Zvai Leumi, which committed acts of terrorism and assassination against the British and organized illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine." (11)

Is the present state of Israel and Zionism in general compatible with the Jewish teaching of the Golden Rule and treating the neighbor or the stranger as yourself? I will leave it to the reader to gather further information, think honestly and clearly, applying the different narrations of the Golden Rule from different angles and decide for oneself.

Dr. Zia H. Shah is the Chief Editor of the Muslim Times with 39,000 followers in Twitter; has authored 400 articles on Religion, Secularism and Religion and Science.

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Love your Neighbor – Teachings of Jesus Christ (as)

Seher Bhatti

Jesus Christ (as) preceded Prophet Muhammad (sa) when he came as a Messenger for the Jewish nation. Though he focused his teachings for the reformation of the Jews of his time, through the extraordinary endeavors of his followers his teachings spread far and wide among other nations by the passage of time. The main teaching of Jesus Christ (as) is love, and it exhibits a paramount virtue of Christianity. The followers of Jesus Christ (as) claim that the entire religion of Christianity can be summed up in one word 'love'. Therefore, along with winning the love of God, to love those who live alongside one another is the basis of Christianity

Jesus Christ (as) was born as a Jew, and as such he did not claim to change the commandments of God that composed the Jewish Law. He came to fulfill it, to exhibit its essence in action. Concerning neighbors, the Torah contained the commandments: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."(1)

Jesus Christ (as) expands the above commandment that tells what not to do to neighbors, and presents it in the positive – what to do with a neighbor. In the New Testament, the Parable of the Good Samaritan clearly presents Jesus Christ's teachings on the subject of loving your neighbor in the positive. One day an expert on Moses' laws came to test Jesus' (as) orthodoxy by asking him this question:

"Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"

So he answered and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with your entire mind; and love your neighbor as yourself."

He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Then Jesus answered and said, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him when he fell among the thieves?" And he said, "He who showed mercy on him."

Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." (2)



Here we have to understand that though the Jewish lawyer was expressing his desire to fulfill the Law in the best way, but still he wanted to obey it by limiting its scope, by defining "neighbor" in the literal sense that one who lives close by, or one who is Jewish. But Jesus Christ (as) expanded the definition of "neighbor", and included even a Samaritan who was not of Jewish race. In the story, the Jewish priest and a Levite (who serves Jewish sanctuaries) were not true "neighbors" as they did not show any mercy to their fellow religionist. On the other hand, it was well-known that the Jews did not get along with the Samaritans. In fact their feud dated centuries old. The Jews at the time of Jesus Christ (as) did not think very highly of the Samaritans due mainly to their past of intermarriages with foreigners. The Jews felt that the Samaritans were corrupting the Judaic religion by adopting outside customs. (3) In this story a Samaritan who was supposedly an enemy of the Jews took pity on this wounded Jew, helped him to safety, stayed with him throughout the night, and leaving some extra money for him to be taken care of by the innkeeper.

The moral here is about extending good behavior to our neighbors, and fellow human beings who are also counted as our neighbors. It is very easy to be nice to someone we like, but how easy it is to mete out that same treatment to someone we don't like, or are not supposed to like! Jesus Christ (as) teaches a valuable lesson here, a lesson that we need very much today. Taking care of the adversaries if applied today in practice would eliminate much of the world's strife and painful issues.

Jesus Christ (as) did not stop there. In the Book of Mark it is written:

"And one of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that he had answered them well, asked him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?"

Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'Hear O Israel! The Lord our God is One Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'"The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."(4)

In the Book of John, it is written that Jesus Christ (as) said:

"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (5)

Jesus (as) stresses the good treatment of everybody thinking them as the neighbors, as if all are near us. How do we think of your neighbors? Are they pleasant? Do they, or would they, offer their help when needed? Generally the answer is yes. These are people we would like to be around since they live

near us. These people are near us physically, but in our hearts they are also near. This is the essence of Jesus' (as) teachings. When we have our close inhabitants in our hearts, we ought to think of others in a similar way. We don't have to be best friends with them and get matching bracelets, or sing kumba yaa with them around a camp fire. All Jesus (as) was trying to say is that we are better than those who mistreat others. We don't have to bring ourselves down to their level. When someone we don't like needs us, are we to avoid them and walk away? Or, should we look at them and then carry on? Neither of these things are what Prophet Jesus (as) taught. He was far wiser than the Jews of the time and deserves credit for that. His teachings are well-known today and are still used as examples. It is obvious by reading the above quotations from the Gospels of Luke and Mark that Jesus (as) considered any and all as "neighbors." It would only do us good to act on these valuable lessons to improve upon the present day social conditions.



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Unity in Diversity

Rabia Mir

Islamic Viewpoint on Ethnic Differences and Spiritual Brotherhood

Islam is one of the largest and the fastest growing religions in the world.

While the cradle of its origin was a very specific geographical point and a very contained cultural framework, its reach, thereafter, has been pervasive, as was always its intent. (1) Within the span of a mere 1400 years, the religion introduced to the Arabian Peninsula by an illiterate Arab merchant has followers all across the globe today. The Holy Prophet Muhammad's (sa) teachings are embedded, to one extent or another, in nearly every world culture. Islam's Holy Book, the Qur'an, revealed to him, has been translated into dozens upon dozens of languages. Allah is looked to (even if His commandments are not adhered to) by a billion people on Planet Earth.

Despite their subscription to the same faith, Muslims are deeply divided on a multitude of matters, not least of which is their ethnic identities. While one's ethnicity forms a crucial component of one's identity and merits respect in its own right, the question arises as to how to balance one's ethnic identity in relation to the rising tide of globalization. As the world becomes smaller and our interactions with people of different backgrounds and viewpoints become more prevalent, how does Islam advise that we negotiate inter-ethnic relations?

The Holy Qur'an advises on this front: "O mankind! We have created you from a male and female; and We have made you tribes and sub-tribes that you may know one another." (2)

Contrary to those who maintain that Islam is a monolithic religion which requires blind adherence and the erosion of all reason and individual identity, this verse highlights that Islam is, in fact, a religion that recognizes and promotes distinctions even as it promotes unity and brotherhood. This verse acknowledges the existence of different peoples and different cultures. It also encourages believers to seek out knowledge of and insight into one's own and others' cultures, thereby encouraging mutual discovery, interaction, growth and development.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad (ra), comments on this verse, stating:

"The whole human race is one family. Division into tribes, nations, and races is meant to give them better knowledge of

one another in order that they might benefit from one another's national characteristics and good qualities." (3)

Thus, the Holy Qur'an encourages inter-ethnic interaction so that different groups may learn from one another and may share spiritual insights. Furthermore, while the Holy Qur'an makes a point of mentioning and encouraging the beauty of earth's ethnic diversity, it also makes a point of stating that this diversity arises from a point of common occurrence. Hence, despite all our differences, we must not ignore the fact that we stem from the same point of Creation. This works towards undercutting any sense of superiority that any one ethnic group might maintain over another. So while we may have numerous differences between us and while those differences may beautify us, we must not forget that, at the end of the day, so to speak, we are each a frail and finite creation born of a male and female, i.e. we are all the same, even in our distinctions, and vice versa

The same verse of the Holy Qur'an referred to above, goes on to say:

"Verily, the most honorable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is most righteous among you. Surely, Allah is all-Aware, all-Knowing." (4)

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) continues on this point, stating:

"The...verse lays down the basis of an all-comprehensive, all-pervading brotherhood of man. The verse, in fact, constitutes the Magna Carta of human fraternity and equality. It lays the axe at the false and foolish notions of superiority...all men have been declared equal in the sight of God. The worth of a man is not to be judged by the pigment of his skin, the amount of wealth he possesses, or by his rank or social status, descent or pedigree, but by his moral greatness and by the way in which he discharges his obligations to God and man." (5)

Thus, the Holy Qur'an instructs all believers to recognize that no one ethnicity and, or, race is superior to another. It is only moral conduct or spiritual righteousness that makes one superior to any other in the sight of God. Hence, inter-ethnic interactions serve a second purpose. They offer an opportunity not only to learn of and from each other, but also to do our best to compete in acts of virtue, as the Holy Qur'an states:

“Vie then with one another in good works.” (6)

Consider for example that a specific ethnic group may be particularly well-versed in a specific area of knowledge, while another group is well-versed in another area of knowledge. Not only can and should these two groups teach one another and learn from one another, but their interactions will inevitably also provide them a platform to build on each other’s knowledge, thereby progressing as a single unit of humanity as well. Interactions allow for mutual appreciation, learning and progress. Thus, ethnic differences should not be looked at as barriers, nor as cloaks of superiority, but simply as beautiful identity markers bestowed by Allah, forged by time and circumstance. These identity markers should be revealed in as such, but never idolized nor ever belittled beyond that.

Issues arising from ethnic differences are inevitable for a religion that is meant to exist for all times to come, for all peoples. Indeed, even the Prophet Muhammad (sa) foresaw the probability of such issues arising and echoed in his final sermon the Holy Qur’an’s teaching that no one race or people were above any other and only one’s conduct determined one’s stature. (7) Indeed, the Companions of the Prophet (sa) took his message and teaching to heart and practiced it in their daily lives. For example, Hazrat Zainab (ra), a lady of high esteem and heritage, agreed to marry Hazrat Zaid (ra), a former Abyssinian slave, at the suggestion of the Holy Prophet (sa). As far as Islam was concerned, the bride and groom’s ethnic, economic and lineage differences paled in comparison to the importance of their conduct and conviction. Although the marriage did not last, unfortunately, due to personality and psychological differences between the husband and wife, it did set a golden precedent for all times to come. (8)

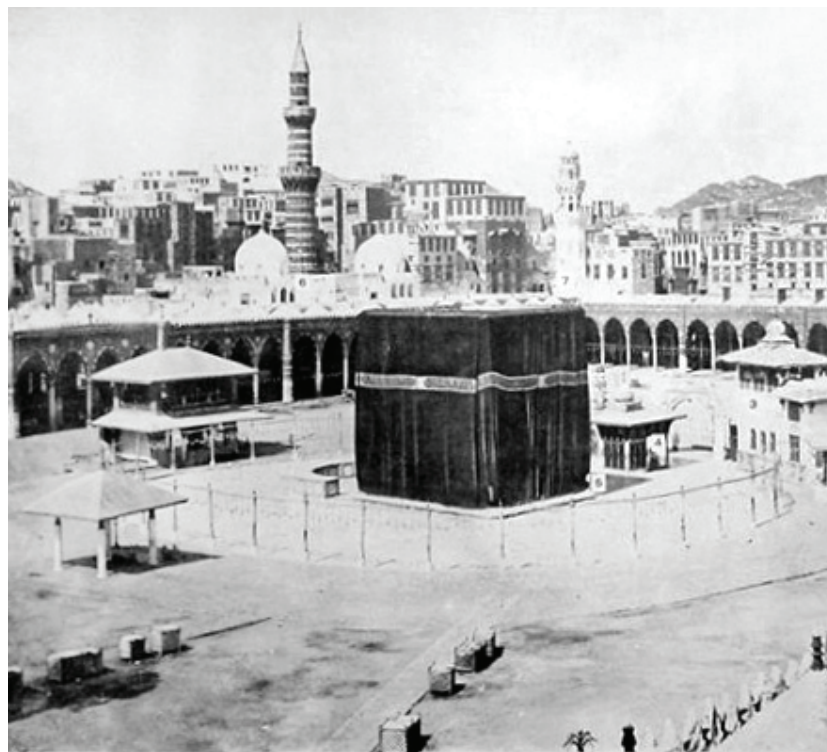
It is common knowledge that pre-Islamic Arabia was deeply divided and tribal warfare ran rampant therein. Tribal relations were forged at birth, by virtue of blood, and inter-tribal politics were not characterized by grace, forbearance or friendship, rather each tribe asserted its right by way of warfare and bloodshed. (9) Further, based on a purview and analysis of international relations today and the imposition of such analysis upon the tribal relations of Pre-Islamic Arabia, it seems fair to say that amongst the Arab tribes, the most effective in warfare were deemed superior and superior tribes maintained an aura of both political and psychological power over inferior tribes. In a harsh environment made up of men who were warriors either by necessity and, or, by choice, inferiority was inevitably an invitation to insult, and to bear excessive hardship.

The advent of Islam provided a narrative of unity and brotherhood beyond the binds of blood. That is, people found themselves bound not by some accident of birth, but by their moral convictions. (10) Individuals of different tribes became bound



to one another in oaths of fidelity and brotherhood by mere virtue of their subscription to the same ideals. Lifetime foes became life time friends. Believers were advised that they were brethren by virtue of their faith, regardless of what other differences defined them, as it states in the Holy Qur’an: “All believers are brothers.” (11)

While the Holy Qur’an recognizes ethnic diversity as a right and a thing of beauty, it also instructs its followers to recognize that ethnicity is not a source of superiority or inferiority, nor should it be a source of division. The Islamic faith changed the land-



scape of Arabia, designating conviction and compatriotism in faith as the definitive factor in forging ties and promoting spiritual brotherhood. It is unfortunate that the vast majority of Muslims today have forgotten this. This forgetfulness or deliberate oversight, as the case may be, is perhaps the cause of much of the disarray in the Muslim world. A billion people united by conviction and yet divided by interpretation fostered by variant cultural views and highly misplaced notions of ethnic superiority and inferiority have found themselves at the bottom of the global totem pole. Islam may be one of the fastest growing religions in the world but it will not bear any weight until its adherents stand united, beyond the façade of ethnic (and other) divisions. The Holy Prophet (sa) had prophesied about such divisions in this age and had also foretold the advent of the Messiah as the harbinger of unity amongst Muslims. The Messiah would guide them aright based on the

true teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the true practices of the Holy Prophet (sa). Both the Qur'an and the Sunnah demonstrate that while Islam appreciates diversity, it requires of its adherents unity based on common convictions and righteous conduct. As prophesied by the Holy Prophet (sa), such unity will be brought about in the Latter Age by the second coming of the Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani (as).

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Importance of Interfaith Dialogue

Amtul Kafi Yadullah Bhunnoo

Dialogue is often confused with debate. Debate is a way of presenting the best argument to prove that your point is correct, while dialogue is a way to promote understanding and accepting the differences. Interfaith dialogue in particular is about individuals from various faith groups coming together to form a “mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate with each other in spite of their differences.” (1) There is no doubt that the emerging hatred for religions, and especially of Islam is due to lack of understanding and a heap of misinformation and misconceptions presented by the media. Communities that lack diversity often become prey to such representation of Islam thus creating fear and abomination of this faith.

In 2010, Pastor Terry Jones promoted the burning of Qur’an because he believed “it’s full of lies”. But when asked what set him off to burn it, he simply replied that “I have no experience with it whatsoever. I only know what the Bible says.” (2) He further remarked “... have you ever really seen a really happy Muslim? As they're on the way to Mecca? As they gather together in the mosque on the floor? Does it look like a real religion of joy?” (3) Although Mr. Jones never read the Qur’an or met a Muslim but his tool of knowledge was the media. So, is Mr. Jones really to be blamed? The news media often shows Muslims either fighting with each other or against the western world. This is why it becomes imperative for Muslims to engage in interfaith dialogue.

When a Muslim talks about interfaith dialogue, some people ask how is that possible when the Qur’an says: “O ye who believe! take not the Jews and the Christians for friends. They are friends one to another. And whoso among you takes them for friends is indeed one of them. Verily, Allah guides not the unjust people.” (4) This verse is wrongly interpreted by most people to show some kind of natural hostility and hatred of Muslims towards non-Muslims. However, if the context of this verse is taken into account, keeping the history and context in mind, it becomes apparent that during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (sa) when Jews and Christians were at war with Muslims, because of their beliefs, it would have been foolish to make friends with those who you are fighting against. Nonetheless, there are many more places where Allah says to bring about love between the Muslims and their enemies in the Qur’an: “It may be that Allah will bring about love between you and those of them with whom you are now at enmity; and

Allah is All-Powerful; and Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.” (5) This and other similar verses enjoin Muslims to be kind and generous towards others regardless of their religion, and that war is only permissible against hostile tribes who persecute Muslims on account of religious differences. In any case, remember that rather than creating differences, Islam teaches respect and acceptance of all prophets including Jesus and Moses, thus uniting us under one God. (6)



In 2014, permission to build a dome of a mosque was rejected in Halesowen, West Midlands, England, UK. Apparently hundreds of people complained against building this mosque at the first place. In response to this opposition to build a mosque, representative of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community told the media that "The local people don't know the facts. Islam is a peaceful religion and the Muslims here are peace loving people, we do a lot for the community." The rejection was indeed due to lack of understanding of Islam, but if more interfaith dialogue was promoted, this situation would not have arisen. (7)

People are often very curious about other people's beliefs and ideas but are cautious not to ask questions about their faith fearing that their questions may offend them. However, if welcomed in an environment to freely present their doubts and thoughts into questions, most individuals open up. Visits to churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques are often the best way to provide suitable environment for open and honest dialogue about someone's faith.

Religious dialogue does not need to be held on a specific day and time. It can be arranged on any day and anytime. However, personal, one-on-one contact, is usually more effective in creating positive relationships rather than large group meetings. Neighbours are the first point of contact to start building a relationship of love, peace, and unity regardless of what their religion is. Celebrating religious festivals by sending greeting cards is a way to promote inclusion and further understanding. No doubt, communication is the lifeline of any relationship.



An example of diverse communities coming together was the recent death of Mr. Asad Shah. Mr. Shah, an Ahmadi Muslim, was murdered for his beliefs. Just hours before his death Mr. Shah wished a "happy Easter to my beloved Christian nation". His utmost kindness and respect for everyone brought together the community which raised more than £100,000 for his family in his remembrance. (8), (9)

Another way to strengthen community spirit and engagement of interfaith dialogue is by holding these dialogue with older and young generation of various faiths. In these gatherings individuals can share and learn from each other's stories while also tackling other social issues like isolation of elderly in the society. Participants can also gain from the wisdom of the old and the creativity of thought from the young. It is also important to read the Holy books in question and have knowledge of various religious ideologies too. Having peace conferences, hijab day, inviting neighbours to open fast at home or mosque are indeed ways to develop understanding and unity.



Most of the political leaders of the world work only towards their personal interest and this is nothing different from the religious leaders as well. These religious leaders see a weak point in society, which is that there is general lack of knowledge and ignorance about religion and beliefs. This gives them the strength to mould their way to power. An example is the Mullah's of Pakistan who have banned Ahmadi Muslims from practising their faith. It is not because they think it is false, but that they see it as a threat to their leadership. Ahmadi Muslims are banned from holding discussions, celebrations or even saying "salam" or "peace be unto you" in public. It is apparent that this has caused a division in the society and has given rise to intolerance and violence in the country, leading to many innocent lives being lost. This increasing attitude of intolerance can be attributed to the banning of any interfaith dialogue.

The importance of interfaith dialogue and its benefits are innumerable and there is no doubt that without it, peace and understanding between various societies cannot be maintained. In 1967, Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih III (rh) was asked by a news reporter in Switzerland about the role of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Islam to which he replied, "The [Ahmadiyya] movement plays this part, [and] we believe that the Mahdi has come to create the conditions of peace in this world. We believe in equality of human beings in the rule of law. We are against all types of oppression." and he was then asked "how do you conduct your mission in Europe?" to which he replied "We try to win the hearts." (10) Indeed "love for all, hatred for none" is the motto of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community.

Amidst all the chaos and fighting in this world, there is only one true leader who is working towards making people and their leaders realise their duty towards each other and to their Creator for the betterment of the society. He is the current head and Khalifa of Islam, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba). He is raising his voice for peace and love. He is also an embodiment of empowerment and promotes the true teachings of Islam. He delivered the keynote address at the historic "Conference of World Religions" on February 11, 2014. He said: "All the major religions of the world taught the worship of God and love and compassion for mankind in their original form." He also said: "if these original teachings were upheld today it would lead to a harmonious society, free from conflict and war." He condemned governments across the world for prioritising defence and military spending above and beyond social welfare and humanitarian projects. (11)

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RELIGION & SCIENCE

Evolution of Empathy

Dr. Zia H. Shah

A Colorado woman managed to fight off a mountain lion that was attacking her 5-year-old son. During the harrowing rescue in June of 2016, she "reached into the animal's mouth and wrestled her son's head from its jaws," the Aspen Times reported. The child was playing outside with his brother when his mother heard the sound of screaming, Pitkin County police said in a statement. She rushed outside to find a mountain lion on top of her son.

"The woman charged the animal, yanked away one of its paws and discovered her son's whole head was in its mouth," the Associated Press reported. She was then "able to physically remove her son from the mountain lion," the police said. (1)

The evolutionary history of empathy is the history of mammals and their caring for their off springs. We owe our existence, our maternal instinct, and our empathy in general, in a materialistic sense, to a chance meteor strike and a small mammal, who survived the meteor impact that killed all the dinosaurs, some sixty million years ago and cleared the planet for the mammals to evolve in diverse forms.

The earliest mammals and those that survived extinction of dinosaurs were very small, active and mostly lived in trees. Today, there are approximately 5,000 species of living mammals, arranged in about 125 families and 29 orders.

Most people cannot help but yawn reflexively when someone else starts doing it first. No one knows why, but researchers at the State University of New York recently learned that people are better able to identify with another's state of mind who also yawn more readily in response to others. Children with autism, a condition characterized by an inability to interact socially, do not catch yawns, scientists at the University of London's Birkbeck College reported in 2007. (2)

But monkeys do. Chimpanzees will yawn when shown a computer animation of another monkey yawning, Dr. de Waal and his colleagues reported in the Proceedings of the Royal Society. "Yawn contagion is not completely understood, but it is related to empathy," he says. (3)

In other words, not only humans but the primates also have empathy. In the first case of its kind, a female chimpanzee has been observed caring for an infant with severe disabilities in the wild.

A young chimpanzee was discovered in Mahale Mountains National Park in Tanzania. Known as XT11, she lived for 23 months. She was the sixth child of her 36-year-old mother, Christina. Physically, XT11 was similar to a captive chimpanzee that had symptoms similar to Down syndrome.

It seems likely that XT11 only lived as long as she did because of the care provided by her mother, and that she would not have survived without it. Reporting in the journal *Primates*, researchers say that the mother "responded to XT11's abnormal behaviors, limited abilities and needs." (4)



A tiny mammal that weighed less than a chipmunk and coexisted with dinosaurs may have been an ancient forerunner to mammals and eventually humans, according to a new study. Scientists working in Northeast China discovered the fossil of the diminutive *Juramaia sinensis*, which means the Jurassic mother from China, and dated the remains to about 160 million years ago, some 35 million years before the previous find for earliest mammalian ancestor. The great evolutionary lineage that includes us had a very humble beginning, in terms of body mass, Zhe-Xi Luo, a paleontologist at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh who led the

team that discovered the fossil, told National Geographic.

The find offers a clue to when mammals split into placental mammals -- animals, like humans, that give birth to relatively developed young which are nurtured in the womb through nutrient-rich placenta -- and marsupial mammals, animals like kangaroos that spend less time pregnant and produce less mature babies. (5)

Talking about empathy, "All mammals have some degree of it, and I think the origin is in maternal care," Dr. de Waal says. "I think mammals need a mechanism like this because a female needs to be very sensitive to emotional signals that come from offspring. We just have a more powerful imagination and that amplifies our capacity for empathy." (6)

The most compelling evidence for the strength of animal empathy came from a group of psychiatrists led by Jules Masserman at Northwestern University. The researchers reported in 1964 in the American Journal of Psychiatry that rhesus monkeys refused to pull a chain that delivered food to themselves if doing so gave a shock to a companion. One monkey stopped pulling the chain for 12 days after witnessing another monkey receive a shock. Those primates were literally starving themselves to avoid shocking another animal. (7)

An increasing number of studies in animal behavior and neuroscience claim that empathy is not restricted to humans, and is in fact as old as the mammals, or perhaps older. Examples include dolphins saving humans from drowning or from shark attacks. Professor Tom White suggests that reports of cetaceans having three times as many spindle cells, the nerve cells that convey empathy, in their brains as we do might mean these highly-social animals have a great awareness of one another's feelings. (8)

A multitude of behaviors observed in primates, both in captivity and in the wild, and in particular in bonobos, which are reported as the most empathetic of all the primates. (9), (10) A recent study has demonstrated prosocial behavior elicited by empathy in rodents. (11)

Rodents have been shown to demonstrate empathy for cage mates (but not strangers) in pain. (12)

Before the evolution of mammals, the dramatic event that set the stage for empathy was the transition from asexual multiplication to sexual multiplication. Life forms had been multiplying asexually, for almost two billion years, by simple cell division before sexual multiplication arrived on the scene.



It is rocks in Arctic Canada that hold the clues scientists were looking for in this regards. The rocks were deposited in marine tidal environments 1.2 billion years ago and they contain fossils that tell us about the first sexual reproduction. (13)

A fossil called *Bangiomorpha pubescens* is a multicellular organism that sexually reproduced, the oldest reported occurrence in the fossil record. *B. pubescens* was not a fish, or even an animal. It was a form of red algae or seaweed. It was seaweed that first had sex.

The evidence that these fossils sexually reproduced is in the finding that the spores or reproductive cells they generated came in two forms – male and female. Today we know that red algae lack sperm that actively swim. They rely on water currents to transport their reproductive cells, which is likely how they have been doing it for the last 1.2 billion years.

Sexual multiplication set the stage for close bonding of the pair that we see in so many mammalian and bird species. Interestingly, the transition of asexual to sexual multiplication on our planet earth is mentioned in the Holy Quran:

"O ye people! Be mindful of your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and created therefrom its mate, and from them twain spread many men and women; and be

mindful of your duty to your Allah, in Whose name you appeal to one another, and be mindful of your duty to Him, particularly respecting ties of kinship. Indeed, Allah watches over you." (14)

In the past, before people knew much about evolution, the Muslims interpreted this verse as referring to the prophet Adam and mother Eve and assumed that Eve came from the rib of Adam, as suggested in the Bible. But, now that increasing evidence is available that the prophet Adam was not the first man and that Eve did not come from his rib, the modern interpretation of this verse would be that it talks about the evolution of sexual multiplication, some 1.2 billion years ago. In the very first instance the first spouse did come directly from its mate and the stage was set for sexual multiplication some 1.2 billion years ago. This is the only reasonable way to understand this verse in the light of modern science.

Sexual multiplication set the stage for a set of parents taking care of the young ones, which got refined in the mammalian species until some 5-6 million years ago, when the human lineage separated from the lineage that led to chimpanzees.

Living in small bands in harsh conditions in Africa, and breeding mainly within their own band, our hominid and early human ancestors were under intense evolutionary pressures to develop strong teamwork as a band while they competed fiercely - and often lethally - with other bands for scarce resources. Hominids started making stone tools about 2.5 million years ago and during the 100,000 generations since, the brain has tripled in size. Much of that new neural volume is used for interpersonal capacities such as empathy, language, cooperative planning, altruism, parent-child attachment, social cognition and the construction of the personal self in relationships. (15)

Homo sapiens means clever ape. We are clever to be sure, but we are clever in order to relate. It would be perhaps more accurate to call our species Homo Sociabilis, the sociable ape. (16) An ape that empathizes with the fellow apes!

As the caring and empathetic humans evolved the stage was set for revelation to further enhance and embellish their empathy and mutual love.

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Former Presidential Candidate, Martin O'Malley, Headlines Nation's Longest Running Muslim Convention

U.S. lawmakers, governors, diplomats and faith leaders tout Ahmadiyya Muslim Community as a role model for fighting extremism, pursuing peace

Prominent civic, political and religious leaders across the country lauded the efforts of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA during its 68th Annual Convention this past weekend in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. More than 8,000 convention delegates, including 1,500 guests, attended the oldest and longest running Muslim convention in America to

discuss efforts to combat extremism and the role of the new "True Islam" campaign in that effort.

Former Maryland Governor and U.S. Presidential candidate Martin O'Malley headlined the guest session and spoke to the audience about the work being done to end extremism. He said, "The True Islam campaign is a gift. It underscores the freedom of conscience, religion, charity, kindness, and generosity to strangers. These values have been demonstrated the world over by you."

Ambassador Jackie Wolcott, Commissioner of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, who was over-

joyed to attend the Muslim convention, discussed her expertise on the war against religious freedom. She stated, "Since your movement's founding, there has been no stronger voice against the rise of extremism and hatred than yours, nor has there been a stronger voice for the recognition that we cannot counter religious extremism of some without defending the religious freedom of all."



Ambassador Jackie Walcott

The convention attendees also witnessed an unlikely speaker when Ted Hakey, Jr., a former Marine who shot at the Community's mosque in Connecticut in November 2015, took the stage and explained why he was there. "Nobody is more surprised than me that I'm here today. I see the banner on the wall: Love For All, Hatred For None and I'm living proof that it works. Forgiveness, education, and Grace of God will overcome hatred every single time." Since the mosque shooting, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has forgiven Mr. Hakey and he routinely attends the mosque and engages in fellowship with Muslims.



Ted Hakey, Jr. Connecticut

Pennsylvania State Representative Mark Cohen, who is the Dean of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, expressed his appreciation of the work and message of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community: "Your presence here today - and your advocacy of rational, common sense means of settling



Mark Cohen (Pennsylvania State Representative)

disputes, your announcement of violence, your obvious love for all Americans and all people, your willingness to publicly explain your beliefs and to invite others who are not familiar with your beliefs to understand what they are - does great things for expanding honest dialogue and mutual understanding. I really wish that one of your spokesmen was at the conventions in Cleveland or Philadelphia."



Nick Miccarelli (Pennsylvania House of Representatives)

Nick Miccarelli, from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, presented the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community with a citation in recognition for their efforts. He expressed appreciation of its efforts by stating that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community "is a shining light of freedom and tolerance in a world that is in desperate need of understanding."

Brian Levin, the Director of the Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism at California State University in San Bernardino, addressed the convention floor and cited examples of American heroes who have been Muslim, including Muhammad Ali and Captain Humayun Khan, whose father moved a nation with his address at the Democratic National Convention. After citing examples of Islamophobia and the dangers of terrorists, Mr. Levin concluded, "In Our America, our religious liberty fulfills the dreams of our ancestors, but only if we work together to sustain it."



Brian Lavin (Director of the Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism at CA State University

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf, who attended last year's annual convention, sent a video message this year to be played for the convention audience, in which he said he has been "impressed by the spirit of volunteerism, your deep commitment to serve humanity, and the extensive work you're doing to promote interfaith peace and harmony. You're leading by example wherever you are...I want to especially commend the leadership of His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the global Spiritual Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, who has twice graced Pennsylvania with his presence. He's a tireless advocate for global peace and interreligious harmony."

Harrisburg Mayor Eric Papenfuse sent a video message to the convention audience, which he said: "Your community has been a vibrant part of Pennsylvania since 1920 when the first Ahmadi Missionary arrived in Philadelphia. I would like to applaud your community's True Islam campaign to fight extremist ideology and protect our national security. You are truly an example of peace and goodwill throughout the world."



Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA also presented its annual Humanitarian Award to Dr. Milton Boniuk, Founder of Boniuk Institute for Religious Tolerance at Rice University.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community also was given a citation from the Maryland General Assembly for the work of its local chapters. In addition, over two dozen other U.S. lawmakers and state and city officials sent official greetings.

Love for All

Tuesday, 16 August 2016

www.aglimpseoflondon.com

"Love thy neighbour as thyself" is a Christian (and Jewish) commandment that seems to have slipped off the tablet in recent years, (either that or there is a lot of self hate in the world). "Love for all, hatred for none" is the mantra for the Ahmadi Muslim sect that seems to be alive and well. How so? I hear you ask, aren't Muslims all terrorists threatening the western way of life?

I'm a curious person by nature and anything I don't understand (or know much about) I do my best to investigate to enable me to make up my own mind about what it all means. We are living in troubled times with war, refugees, Brexit, inequality and a total mistrust of politicians. It was this curiosity that resulted in me spending a day in Hampshire at an event called Jalsa with 38,000 muslims from 90 countries.

A flag for each country with staunch flag bearers and a water feature promising to take the Ahmadiyya message to all corners of the world, was the central feature of the temporary village that was erected on this Hampshire farm for the three day religious festival. The scale of this village is mind boggling. (More on this later.)

Among the many exhibitions that I visited was one of the artefacts and arts of the ancient world. A replica of the shroud of Turin with both owner of the shroud Pam Moon, and the world's leading expert on the shroud, Barry Schwortze, both present and more than happy to discuss everything that is known about the shroud (and you thought this was only in Christian texts). Other items included an ancient manuscript, ceramics, fabrics, and metalware. Many pieces were from a private collection and are hundreds of years old. It was fascinating to learn from looking at a 12th century book of the Quran that the text in black (in the centre) is the teachings of Islam, but the writing in red around the edges of the pages are the "thoughts" of scholars in later years. Some of these "thoughts" have subsequently been referred to as authoritative Islamic texts.



The temporary village had its own TV and radio station, as well as dedicated areas for all the international media. The Ahmadiyya women ran their own media network, which meant every job and function was carried out by women. How does that suppressed muslim women mantra go again? Well, however it goes it was all blown out of the water here. They were a well oiled and skilled team. Not only did they work without a man in sight (other than those they were interviewing) but they also had their kids wander in and out as if this is a normal part of life.



As in any village there were the markets. Food, stalls, clothing, jewellery, toys, everything you might want or need. I was transported to many parts of the globe. The common thread was the message of love not hate. The man from this stall sold hats, t-shirts, and jewellery, most with messages of love and peace.



What happened to the hippies of the 60's and 70's who believed in these messages? Remember John and Yoko? Why does this same generation now mistrust anyone who is different? What happened to change all of this for the worse? I would like to hear what others think about this (yes you dear readers).

Once upon a time, a million years ago, I ran a business in the food industry, so I'm always interested in the behind the scenes work, (I promised you a few sentences ago we would look at the scale of things in this temporary village). Now just start thinking about feeding 38,000 people three times a day. At my request I was transported to the kitchens where I witnessed the manufacture of 100,000 breads made in one day! Not a cross word spoken, everyone working together ... probably a place that Gordon Ramsay would benefit from visiting!

However let's not forget the primary purpose of the three days. It is a religious event where the head of the organisation Mirza Masroor Ahmad is sending out a message to the devotees.

Devotees are here to make a pledge to their principals and leader. They were told that "their duty is to give back to the country they live in and to integrate with their neighbours." The principles of the community is to built relationships, to give back, and to be involved in the community whatever the religious differences.

Whatever your beliefs, I cannot disagree with the fundamental message of the Ahmadi of "Love for all, and hatred for none."





República

Nepal Religious leaders gather to commend secularism in

July 11, 2016 01:45 AM , Shraddha Amatya

KATHMNADU, July 11: Religious leaders from the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Sikh and Muslim communities were unanimous in commending secularism in the country on Saturday. Stating that they now feel more equal in the country, the leaders said that secularism ensures religious harmony.

They held discussions over the topic of secularism during the Peace Symposium 2016 meeting organized by the Ahmadiyya community.

“Nepal witnesses many religion practices,” Assistant Minister for the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, Resham Bahadur Lama, said. “Roles of the diverse religious practices have been making Nepalese people very open minded and adaptable to every positive change in our society.”

“We, more than following religious practice, adhere to its meaning because we understand that whatever the religion is, it is a mission to spread peace and humanity.” Lama added. Speaking at the event, leaders from various religious communities lauded Nepal's role in global peace.

Leaders from the Ahmadiyya community also stressed on the misunderstandings created about their Muslim faith due to the recent terrorist attacks in the world.

“Our community believes that there are not one but many prophets in the world spreading the message of peace,” said the president of Ahmadiyya community of Nepal.

“Islam basically believes in promoting peace and humanity. So those who choose violence instead of peace are not real Muslims although they portray themselves as one.”

Meanwhile, Dr Abdul Alim, regional social policy advisor for UNICEF South Asia, expressed his concerns over the increasing influence of nuclear weapons.

“The amount of nuclear power that we have in the world can destroy our world 28 times,” said Dr Alim. “Isn't this happening so because humans have been following the path of injustice and hatred over love, peace and justice?” he questioned.

Dr Alim said that Ahmadiyya community organized the conference to bring all the people from diverse community to promote love and peace over violence to spread peace to prevent the world from having another devastating war.

“The world did not have war because of religion. People chose war because of hatred, egoism and misunderstanding,” added Dr Alim. “We can erase such negativities when we opt for peace, equality and justice. So love all and hate none.”

THE HUFFINGTON POST

INFORM • INSPIRE • ENTERTAIN • EMPOWER

Documentary To Shed Light On Untold Stories Of Muslims In The U.S. Military

It's time America heard these stories of sacrifice.

Antonia Blumberg Associate Religion Editor,
The Huffington Post

08/03/2016

Muslim Americans have served in the U.S. Armed Forces since the days of George Washington. They have fought and died alongside Americans of all religions, races and creeds, yet Islamophobes like Donald Trump continue to question their patriotism.

It's high time America heard their stories.

An upcoming documentary, titled “Muslim Military Stories,” highlights Muslim Americans who have served in the military in the years since September 11, 2001. Director David Washburn combined two interests he had previously worked on veterans and Muslim Americans to capture this unique subset of the Armed Forces.

“The thinking was that Muslim American veterans and service members occupy a really powerful space and can speak to issues like shared sacrifice, discrimination, religious freedom in ways non-Muslims will really tune in to,” Washburn told The Huffington Post.

Case in point, he said, is the Khans' story, which has dominated much of American news media over the last week since Khizr

Khan's powerful DNC speech about his son, Humayun, and Donald Trump's unflattering response.

"Through [Muslim veterans'] stories, we witness how the altruistic values we hold are starkly contrasted with the dark tones and fear that others speak of, like Trump," Washburn said. "The two come together and make such a clear choice, that it can't be ignored."

"So with this project," he added, "I aim to amplify the voices of Muslim Americans vets and service members, so we meet more characters like the Khans."

Nearly 6,000 Muslims currently serve in the U.S. military, according to the Department of Defense. That number could be much higher, though, taking into account the 400,000 service members who have not reported their faith.

Muslim troops have cause to be wary of coming forward about their faith. The country has witnessed an increasing culture of Islamophobia, spurred on by public figures like Trump who have helped push the needle on mainstream anti-Muslim sentiment.

In November, Trump suggested that Muslims should be registered in a database and carry special identification cards. He has also called for a "complete shutdown" of Muslims entering the United States.

Sadly, more than half of Americans share Trump's negative view of Islam. "Muslim Military Stories" aims to aptly address the question: "How can we ask Muslim Americans to fight for freedom abroad while their rights are abused at home?"

Many Republicans and service members denounced Trump's response to the Khan family and praised the sacrifice of Humayun, who was killed while serving in the Army in Iraq but day to day life for Muslims in the military is still complicated.

The military prohibits troops from sporting facial hair (except on a case by case basis) which many Muslim men do to honor the Prophet Muhammad. Then there's the difficulty of finding halal food in military facilities, and the fact that, according to The New York Times, only five out of roughly 2,900 Army chaplains are imams.

For Tian Soepangat, a Muslim Navy veteran featured in a clip on the "Muslim Military Stories" website, the uncertainty over how his faith would be received led him to hide it from his fellow sailors for years.

"I didn't want them to treat me any different than how they would treat anyone else," Soepangat says in the clip. Watch his

story below:

Washburn aims to complete the feature documentary by late 2017, he said, and will be releasing more short clips on the website in the coming months. The director added that, in addition to wide release in the U.S., he hopes to screen the documentary in Muslim-majority countries, "so audiences can hear from Muslim American veterans that we are not at war with Islam," he said.

The stories of Muslim American veterans and service members could be a powerful antidote to bigotry at home, as well.

Craig Considine, a sociologist and researcher of Islam, says that spreading awareness of Muslim Americans' contributions to the Armed Forces may help diminish anti-Muslim attitudes and put the brakes on the mainstreaming of Islamophobia.

"If more people knew about the history of Muslims who have served in the U.S. military, perhaps non-Muslim Americans would have more respect and appreciation for Islam and their fellow Muslim citizens," Considine wrote in a HuffPost blog last year.

After all, he noted, nothing is "more unpatriotic" than "dishonoring soldiers who have fought and died for their country."



poetry

CORNER

IN PRAISE OF GOD

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad,
Promised Messiah and Mahdi (as)

How much discernible is the Light of the Source of all illuminations!
For the eyes, the entire universe is becoming a reflector of His beauty!

On seeing the moon last night, I was moved very much
Because in it there was the beauty of my Beloved to some extent

What marvelous qualities You have put in each and every particle;
Who is there who can comprehend the entire anthology of all these secrets!

No one can fathom the depths of Your Power;
No one can unravel the arduous complexity of Your creation!

Those who are spiritually blind have thousands of veils over their eyes;
Otherwise, Your Beautiful Face was the ultimate goal of all – the believers or the unbelievers!

O, my Beloved! Your attractive looks work like a sharp sword
That cuts down the sorrowful bonds with all the others!

I am suffering the torment of separation; I am in search of some remedy
To be united once again with You, I have mingled myself in dust!

Every passing moment I am restless without You,
I feel suffocation like a patient feels at the time of death.

Find out real quickly what is this wailing and crying in Your vicinity
Lest someone who is gone insane in Your love may bleed to death.



Women's Space

Let Hijab be a Challenge That You Accept

Huma Munir



“Muslims are not American.”

“Muslim women are oppressed, which is why they wear the hijab.”

“Muslims should leave America.”

Living as Muslim-Americans, these are the kind of statements we hear on regular basis in this country these days. This is why, every time I see a Muslim girl with a hijab on, I am moved by her bravery and courage. Muslim women, who cover their heads despite fears of backlash and discrimination, are the true heroes. It takes courage to hold on to our values and our beliefs at a time when everyone around us is questioning our faith.

But unfortunately, while many of us do keep the hijab on, some of us also take it off. I admit it's not easy to wear the hijab, especially given the circumstances these days. Since 9/11 and subsequent terror attacks in this country, hate crimes against Muslims have only increased. Many of us try to justify taking off the hijab by saying that it affects us adversely in our work places, or it opens doors of discrimination or that hijab is perhaps a choice. While I would never judge someone who took off their hijab, I just cannot agree with the reasoning behind it.

Hijab is not a choice— it's an obligation

Many times, young Muslim women confuse the concept of choice and obligation in regards to hijab. While there is no punishment for those who choose not to wear the hijab, it is incorrect to assume that it is a “choice.” Believing women are directed by the Holy Qur'an to observe hijab and be chaste. Allah the Almighty says in the Qur'an, “Say to the believing women that they restrain their looks, and guard their private parts, and that they display not their beauty or their embellishment except that which is apparent thereof, and that they draw their head coverings over their bosoms,” (24:32).

According to the verse, it is clear that Muslim women, who are true believers in Allah and the Islamic teachings, must obey the commandment of hijab. It lays out specific guidelines as to what hijab is. It says that Muslim women should cover their heads and draw the covering over their chests, so as to not display their beauty. Therefore, to think of hijab as a choice is not the right attitude for a true believer. We should strive to observe the hijab so we can be deserving of being called Muslim— a word that means submission to Allah's will.

The challenges of observing hijab

Living in the west, where the concept of hijab is non-existent, I know it can be pretty challenging to follow the teachings of Islam in regards to covering ourselves. But as Ahmadi Muslim women, we should strive to understand why these teachings exist in the first place. Why does Allah want us to cover our beauty? Why does Islam ask us to restrain our gaze? All these injunctions about hijab are there to protect us from harassment and vilification of all kinds. These injunctions are there to help us become stronger and better people.

In my personal experience, hijab has always helped me define my identity outside the confinement of gender— I am a person before I am a woman. When others look at me, they look at the person inside me, because my outer appearance does not distract them from my potential and intellect. As a Muslim woman, I want to be recognized for my talents— not my appearance. In the West, women who choose to wear skimpy clothing, often become targets of sexual harassment. In fact, the western media has portrayed the modern woman as someone who is oozing sexuality and is free to display her beauty in whatever form and shape. These practices exist to put women down— to make them feel as if they are confined by their gender and their outer appearance. Islam liberates women from such dehumanizing practices and protects them against all kinds of harassment.

Hijab helps develop our character

Our western society is obsessed with the notion of “speaking your mind.” In schools, we are told that we should voice our opinions without too much consideration. If we are thinking something, it is okay to say it out loud, according to our teachers and mentors.

I was one of those people, who would bluntly express her opinions, before I started observing hijab. But when I wore the hijab, my life changed dramatically. For the first time in my life, I considered every word I spoke and every action I took. Now that I was representing not just myself but also my faith, I took great care in how I carried myself around others. I didn't pretend to be someone I am not, but hijab helped me get rid of habits like anger and hostility. Before I expressed an opinion that might hurt the sentiments of others, I considered my words carefully. In every situation, I considered whether my reaction is befitting that of a true Muslim. I developed more compassion and kindness for my fellow human beings and made sure that I don't hurt another person through my tongue or actions.

I didn't become perfect, but observing hijab certainly helped me get on the track of self-reformation— the most important jihad in Islam.

Hijab is the means to spreading the message of true Islam

We wake up every single day to some tragedy unfolding in our world. Innocent people are dying every day in the name of Islam. As Ahmadi Muslims, we reject terrorism and embrace pluralism. But even if we do believe in the beautiful ideals of Islam, it is sometimes hard for others to see that. When we wear the hijab, we are easily recognized as Muslim women. Hijab plays an essential role in opening up the conversation about Islam. Our neighbors, colleagues, the media and the scholars are eagerly reaching out to Muslim women to ask

them about Islam. We have an amazing opportunity to educate people about our faith and remove any misconceptions. Hijab helps us do that because it is our identity and people are interested in getting to know more about who we are and what we represent.

The Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) said the jihad of the sword is not valid for Muslims anymore. Today, we must fight the battles through education and academia. As Muslim women, we are in a prime position to partake in the jihad of spreading the true teachings of Islam. We must not let fear of discrimination deter us from our true purpose in life. Let's keep our hijab on and proudly educate people about the true teachings of Islam.

Hijab is not a tool of oppression

Hijab was never meant to harm women or become a tool of oppression. Unfortunately, countries like Saudi Arabia today are repressing women because they believe that hijab means a woman should be locked inside the house. Hijab does not prevent a woman from driving a car, nor does it encourage women to sit at home and not utilize their abilities for the betterment of their societies. Muslim women are encouraged to receive education and if necessary, they are also encouraged to work to help their spouse financially. In fact, in early Islam, many Muslim women fought in the battles alongside men— while wearing the hijab!

A challenge

To Muslim girls living in the United States and everywhere else, I challenge you to keep your hijab on and to answer the vitriol of Donald Trump and others by staying true to your faith. I challenge you to keep your hijab on when someone shouts at you or speaks to you in an ill-mannered way. I challenge you to talk to your bosses at work and tell them you will not take off your hijab because it's not “professional.”

If you truly believe in Allah the Almighty, you will find out that if you stand up to defend your faith, God will stand up to defend you. May Allah give all our girls the chance to deepen our faith by observing hijab and may Allah safeguard each and every one of them from all kinds of harm. Ameen.

Huma Munir is a former journalist and a teacher. She currently writes for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Women Writers' Association. She resides in Miami, Florida.



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Muslim Sunrise December 1975

One is the Human Spirit

Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan

In the Islamic concept, the unity of the human spirit derives from the unity of the creator of the universe. The very first chapter of the Holy Quran, the scripture of Islam, opens with the declaration,

That is to say: The worthiness of the highest praise belongs to God alone, who has created the universe and sustains and nourishes it and leads it stage by stage to perfection.

Jealousies and rivalries that divide the human spirit are generated by our setting up a multiplicity of gods, under varying denominations, race, color, blood, wealth, culture, standard of living, etc. The unifying force must be our consciousness that every human being is a creature of the same God who created us and that his welfare is as dear to him as our own. It is our relationship through him that brings about unity and fosters a spirit of brotherhood. Everything else is divisive and unless it is controlled and regulated by that consciousness would lead to ruin.

We have been admonished; O mankind, be mindful of your duty to your Lord, who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from the two created and spread large numbers of men and women. (4:2)

The diversity of our pursuits and interests should not impel us into situations of hostile and aggressive competition, we must regulate our relationship and seek adjustment and coordination through beneficent cooperation, as we have been directed: Assist one another in piety and rectitude and assist not one another in sin and transgression; and be mindful of your duty to God; Surely God's

punishment is severe. (5:3)

We have been warned against hostility and division and have been urged to unite on the basis of our common allegiance to our maker. Take fast hold, all together, of the rope of God, and be not divided. Call to mind the favor of God which he bestowed upon you when you were at enmity with each other and he united your hearts in love so that by his grace you become as brethren. You were on the brink of a pit of fire and he rescued you from it. Thus does God expound to you his commandments that you may be guided. (3:104)

The message of Islam is universal; it is addressed to whole mankind. It is not confined to any particular people. Nor is any people excluded from it. The Quran affirms: Proclaim, O Prophet: O mankind, verily I am God's messenger to you all. To him belongs the kingdom of heavens and the earth. There is no God but he. He bestows life and he causes death. (7:159) There is no room here for a god who bestows life, for another who maintains it and for a third who destroys it.

The beneficence of the Prophet of Islam was not confined to a particular people. It was unequivocally announced: We have sent thee as a mercy for the entire universe. (21:108)

On the occasion of the Pilgrimage the Holy Prophet proclaimed: There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor for a non-Arab over an Arab; nor is a white one to be preferred over a colored one, nor a colored one over a white one. You are all equal as brothers.

That is why in Islam there has at no time been any distinction on the basis of race, color, or blood. Islam is color blind.

delegation of powers for the purpose of enforcing and protecting certain rights which the people cannot individually

enforce and protect owing to the large number of persons concerned. It is, therefore, a trust, and not in the nature of property. The ownership of the rights concerned is vested in the community and not in the Sovereign. Again, the latter is told that the power vested in him is by way of trust and that he must not abuse or misuse it, and must hand it over to the beneficiaries at the time of his death without deterioration or diminution, that is to say, he must be vigilant in the protection of national and individual interest and rights, and that he would have no power to surrender or damage any portion of them. Rulers and officials are next told to discharge the respective duties of their offices justly and faithfully. The verse then goes on to indicate that the Muslims would forsake this mode of government and would, in imitation of other people, revert to the monarchical and hereditary form of government, but that the admonition of God, viz., that the Muslims should stick to the representative form of government, choosing their best brains to rule over them and to avoid the hereditary form of government, is the best advice. The concluding words of the verse indicate that God has prescribed this mode of government seeing evils of other forms of government adopted by men and hearing the prayers of those who suffered under them, and that the Muslims should, therefore, adhere to it and thus show their gratitude for the favor that God had done them.

There is no privilege in Islam. There is no church, no church hierarchy, no ordination, no priesthood. The whole emphasis is on righteousness. That is the sole badge of honor. The Holy Quran has announced: O mankind, We have created you from male and female, and We have divided you into nations and tribes for greater facility of intercourse. Verily, the most honored among you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely, God is All-Knowing, All-Awake (49.14).

The Quran recognizes that God sent His revelation to every people and that every people has had its Prophet: Thou art but a Warner; and every people has had its guide (13.8). We have sent thee with enduring truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and as a Warner. There is no people to whom a Warner has not been sent (35.25).

It goes much further and requires belief in the truth of all Prophets and all revealed books. For instance: Affirm: We believe in God and in that which has been sent down to us and that which was sent down to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and his children and that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and that which was given to all other Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them and to Him do we wholly submit ourselves (2.137).

And again: The messenger has full faith in that which has been

sent down to him from his Lord and so have the believers: all of them believe in God, and in His angels and in His Books and in His Messengers, affirming: We make no distinction between any of His Messengers (2.286).

This secures reverence for all Prophets and revealed books and promotes and fosters the unity of the human spirit.

Despite the diversity of creeds and beliefs which divides mankind Islam seeks to promote understanding and accord on the basis of a mutually acceptable fundamental. The Holy Quran lays down the directive: Say to the People of the Book: Let us agree upon one matter which is the same for you and for us, that we worship none but God, and that we associate no partner with Him, and that some of us take not others for lords beside God. Then, if they turn away, say to them, Bear Ye witness that we have submitted to God (3.65).

It is the Unity of the Godhead alone that can safeguard the unity of the human spirit.

The children of Adam who started on the Unity of the Godhead soon began to fall away from it and proceeded to fashion various types of gods and even goddesses for themselves. A whole succession of Prophets and divine Messengers were from time to time raised among them in every part of the earth to wean them away from the worship of false gods and to win them back to the worship of the One True God.

The history of man presents a panorama of this struggle between the divinely inspired yearning of the human spirit to reach out to the Unity of the Creator and man's tendency to sink into the worship of false deities of every description. Every falling away was inspired by or imported in its wake the exploitation of man by his fellow man which imposed or involved a division or degradation of the human spirit.

It is not my purpose, nor would time permit, a detailed exposition of the various types of such exploitation. We have had occasion to encounter it, and even to suffer from it, in one form or other, in our own times and lives and persons. Twice within a lifetime has the spirit of division pushed large sectors of humanity into conflict of a type which brought them to the brink of destruction. This realization led to the establishment of the United Nations.

The Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations recites that the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war...and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations

arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, and for these ends to practice toleration and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and to unite their strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all people, had resolved to combine their efforts to accomplish these aims.

This went a long way towards the recognition and affirmation of the unity of the human spirit.

The United Nations was established thirty years ago with a membership of fifty states. Today it has a membership of one hundred and forty two states, a large majority of which were still seeking independence at the inception of the United Nations. The organization is by now well within sight of universality. It is a very satisfactory consummation.

The United Nations has a good record in several other respects; yet though much has been achieved a great deal still remains to be accomplished. It might, however, be hopefully affirmed that the past of the organization constitutes a good augury for its future.

Among the purposes of the United Nations it is to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace; and to be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of their common ends.

One method of promoting such harmony is the provision for the settlement of international disputes of a justiciable character through judicial determination by the International Court of Justice. The Court is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations and functions in accordance with its statute which forms an integral part of the Charter of the United Nations. It may also give an advisory opinion on any legal question which may be submitted to it by the General Assembly or the Security Council, or any other organ of the United Nations or a specialized agency, which may at any time be so authorized by the General Assembly.

It will thus be seen that the Court performs a crucial function in the set-up of the United Nations. It is much to be regretted, however, that it has not been availed of to the degree to which could have been wished.

All members of the United Nations are parties to the Statute of the Court, but they are not thereby rendered amenable to the jurisdiction of the Court. Less than 40 percent of them have filed declarations under Article 36 (2) of the Statute accepting the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court, and most of these declarations are hedged round with escape clauses which operate to render the declaration nugatory.

In my humble opinion the cause of international justice will not be adequately served till the membership of the United Nations carries with it the obligation of compulsory submission to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.

The Court has made a very valuable contribution towards the promotion of the purposes of the United Nations through its advisory opinions on a variety of legal questions. Reference might be made, by way of illustration, to its opinions on different aspects of South Africa's mandate over the territory of South West Africa, and its latest opinion given four days back, on the status of the territory of Spanish Sahara.



Questions & Answers

What is the State of Man after Death?

A: The state of man after death is not a new state, only his condition in this life is made manifest more clearly in the next life. Whatever is the true condition of a person with respect to his beliefs and actions, righteous or otherwise, in this life, remains hidden inside him and its poison or its antidote affects his being covertly. In the life after death it will not be so. One experiences a specimen of it in a dream. The prevailing condition of the body of the sleeper makes itself manifest in his dream. When he is heading towards high fever he is apt to see fire and flames in the dream, and if he is sickening due to influenza or a severe cold he is apt to find himself floating about in water.. Thus, whatever the body is heading for becomes visible in a dream. So, one can understand that the same is the way of God with regard to afterlife. As a dream transmutes our spiritual condition into a physical form, the same will happen in the next life. Our actions and their consequences will be manifested physically in the next life, and whatever we carry hidden within us from this life all be displayed openly on our countenances in the next life. As a person observes diverse types of manifestations in his dreams but is not conscious that they are only manifestations, and dreams them as realities, the same will happen in the next life. Through such manifestations, God will display a new power, a power which is perfect, complete and absolute as He is All Powerful. If we were not to call the conditions of the next life manifestations and were to say that they would be a new creation by Divine power, that would be perfectly correct.

God has said:

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّنْ
قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

No virtuous one knows what bliss is kept hidden from him, as a reward for that which he used to do. (32:18) Thus God had described all those bounties as hidden, the like of which is not to be found in this world. It is obvious that the bounties of this world are not hidden from us and we are familiar with milk, pomegranates and grapes, etc. and have nothing in common with the bounties of this life, except the name. He who conceives of the conditions of paradise in the terms of the conditions of this life has not the least understanding of the Holy Qur'an. In interpreting the above verse, our lord and master, the Holy Prophet (sa) has said that heaven and its bounties are such as no eye has seen, nor has any ear heard, nor have they been conceived by the mind of man, whereas we see the bounties of this world and hear of them and their thought also passes through our minds.

Source: Philosophy of Teachings of Islam, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) of Qadian: pp 88-89, Islam International Publications, Ltd, UK, 1996

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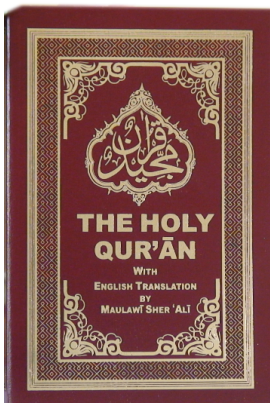
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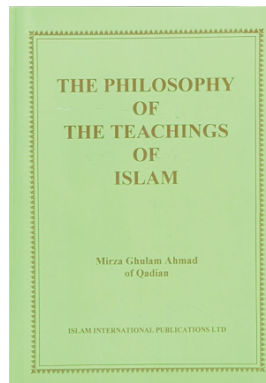


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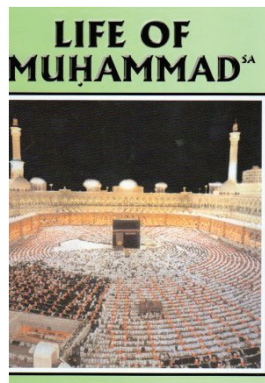
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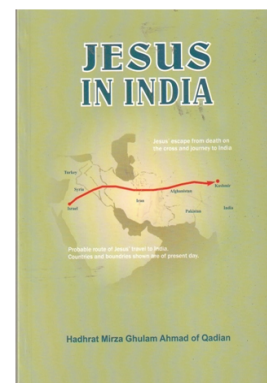
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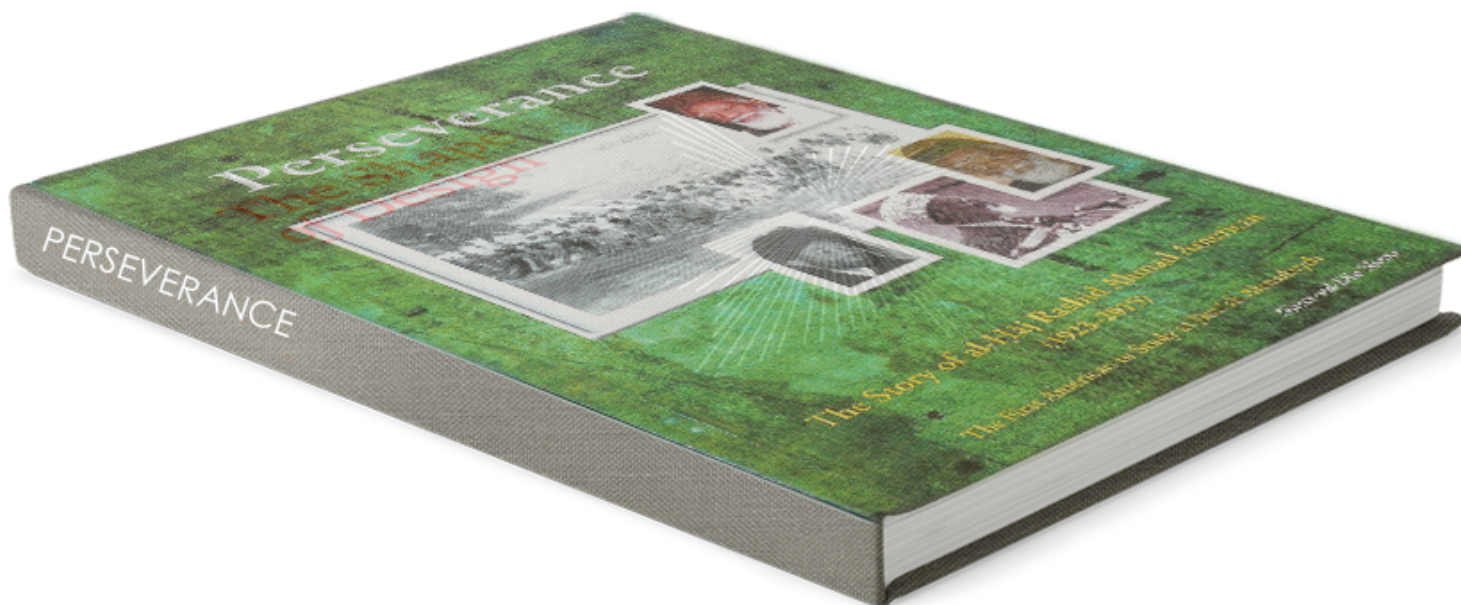


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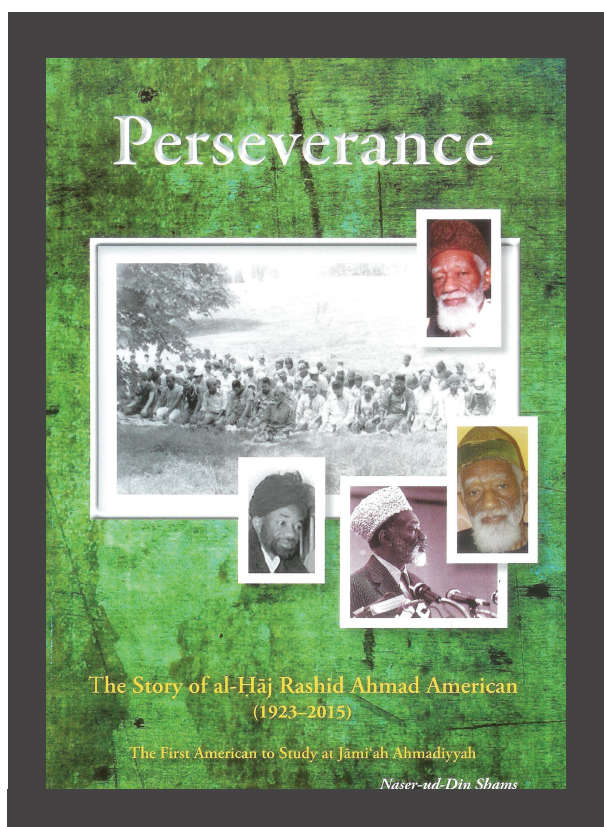
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