

## **Muhammad<sup>sa</sup>, the Messenger of Peace and Reconciliation**

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**Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet. O ye who believe! You *also* should invoke blessings on him and salute *him* with the salutation of peace. (Al-Ahzab, 33:57)**

### **Honored Guests of the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup>:**

Throughout history, many a leaders, movements and nations have stated goals of peace and reconciliation, yet peace and reconciliation are humanity's most difficult and enduring challenges. Almighty Allah has sent over 125,000 messengers and prophets to guide mankind to peace and reconciliation between man and his Creator and between man and man. However, the original teachings and actual practices of these holy men were limited in scope and have been obscured and outdated with the passage of time. It is only the Holy Prophet of Islam, Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa<sup>sa</sup>, whose original teachings and actual practices are not only preserved and relevant today, they are also the most comprehensive and pragmatic.

The noble and peaceful character and conduct of the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> have been noted by many non-Muslim historians and writers. For example:

1. George Bernard Shaw wrote: **He must be called the Savior of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it much needed peace and happiness.** (The Genuine Islam, Vol. 1)

Mahtma Gandhi wrote: **I wanted to know the best of one who holds today undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind... I became more than convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for his pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission.** (*Young India*)

### **What are Peace and Reconciliation?**

In general, peace means calm, tranquility, harmony, serenity, concord, end of war, freedom from strife, etc. On personal level, peace means freedom of the mind from annoyance, anxiety or obsession, etc. On social level, peace means a state of mutual harmony between people or groups, especially in personal relationships. On national and international levels, peace means a state of concord or non-belligerence. Reconciliation means settlement, resolution, understanding, compromise, reunion, appeasement, ceasefire, etc. Given the diversity of

human nature and reaction under different circumstances, no matter how perfectly one may try to be peaceful, conflicts are inevitable within one's self or with others. Therefore, real peace can be restored only through reconciliation.

### **Peace and Reconciliation in Islam**

Peace and reconciliation are fundamental to Islam. Muslims are expected to emulate the attributes of Allah, including *as-salaam*, that is, the **source of all peace**. The very word '*Islam*' is a derivative of the Arabic word *silm* which connotes peace. Every facet of Islam promotes peace, so much so that the personal greeting taught and practiced by the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> is *assalaamo alaikum*, that is, **may peace be on you**. According to the Holy Qur'an, *yahdi behil-laho manit-taba'a ridhwanahu sobolus-salame* (*Al-Maidah, 5:17*), that is, **divine guidance is bestowed on those who seek His pleasure on the paths of peace**. In case of a conflict, the Holy Qur'an admonishes, *as-sulho khair* (*Al-Nisa, 4:129*), that is, **reconciliation is best**, because the consequences of confrontation are a lot harder than those of compromise. Even historically, the dividends of peace and reconciliation have always far outweighed the cost of physical or legal confrontation, both in personal and national relations.

As we study the life of Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup>, we find him as a naturally upright, kind and peaceful person. He preached and practiced peace and reconciliation in all phases of human life – as a lonely orphan, a shepherd, a businessman, a husband and head of the household, a persecuted prophet, an elected Chief of Medina and as a virtual King of Arabia. His teachings and principles about peace and reconciliation are pervasive and proven. Following these teachings we can achieve real peace in our own lives and in our world as did the companions of the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> over 1,400 years ago.

These teachings of peace and reconciliation can be divided into six broad categories; personal, family, social, public, religious, and national.

#### **Personal (Internal) Peace:**

The foundation of a peaceful life is personal or internal peace, that is, peace with one's self and with one's Creator. To obtain personal peace, one has to have a pure and righteous heart to hold a firm belief and trust in Almighty Allah, Who is our Creator, Provider, Sustainer, Comforter and Source of all Peace. We find in the Holy Qur'an that in the beginning of his prophethood, Allah commanded the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup>, *thiabaka fatah-hir, war-rujza fahjur* (*Al-Muddaththir, 74:5-6*), **purify thy heart, and shun uncleanness** that is, **become a paragon of righteousness and purity**. The Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> says in an Urdu couplet, **He who loves the Holy One must purify himself to find Him**. (*Hujjatul Islam, p. 2*) With a pure and righteous heart one can find peace and comfort in the remembrance of Allah as Allah says, *ala bezikril-lahе tatmain-nul qolub* (*Al-Ra'd, 13:29*), that is, **it is in the remembrance of Allah that hearts**

**can find peace.** The Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> demonstrated by his long, lonely sojourns in the Cave of Hira, before as well as after his prophethood, that his real pleasure, comfort and peace laid in the remembrance of Allah. He preferred wakefulness for **tahajjud** over the comfort of sleep. He preached, **as-salaato me'rajul momin**, that is, **salaat** is the spiritual apex of the believer. He did not seek peace and solace in wealth, power or fame – the typical sources of anxiety and conflict. He preferred solitude over multitude. He was a perfect example of **Nafs-e-Mutmainnah**, that is, **soul at peace**. It was his personal peace that carried him through the heinous persecution and personal losses of his young children and beloved wife Hadhrat Khadija<sup>ra</sup> with poise and patience. It was his personal peace that kept him calm and collected in the Cave of Thur on his way to Medina.

### **Family Peace:**

After the **jihad-e-akbar**, that is, the bigger struggle, of personal peace, the next natural step is to strive for family peace. The Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> established family peace by identifying balanced rights and obligations of all its constituents – the parents, the spouses, the children, and the relatives. He was the first to establish the dignity and rights of women. He outlined the rights of the orphans, the deprived, the divorced and the widowed. To establish family peace, he preached to be kind, express love, control anger, stop backbiting, forgive faults, etc. I will present just a sample of the teachings that are essential for family peace.

Regarding parents, Allah says: **Be kind to parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age with thee, never say any word of disgust to them nor reproach them and address them with excellent speech.** (*Bani Israil, 17:24*)

Regarding forgiveness, Allah says, **Forgive and overlook other's offenses, do you not desire that Allah should forgive you?** (*Al-Nur, 24:23*)

Regarding women, Allah says, **Consort with women in kindness.** (*Al-Nisa, 4:20*)

Regarding the status of mothers, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> said, **Paradise lies under the feet of the mother.** (*Nasai*)

Regarding the status of fathers, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> said, **The father is the most central door of all doors of Paradise, it is up to you that you may lose it or protect it.** (*Tirmizi*)

Regarding the role of husbands, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> said, **The best among you is the one who is the best with his wife/family.** (*Tirmizi*)

**He who severs the ties of kinship will not enter paradise.** (*Bukhari*)

**Control your tongue, be content, and seek forgiveness for your mistakes.** (*Tirmizi*)

**He, who is not kind to our young ones and does not recognize the rights of our elders, is not from among us. (Abu Dawood)**

Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> would address social ills, which can harm family peace, in a uniquely loving manner. Hadhrat Safiya<sup>ra</sup>, Hadhrat Hafsa<sup>ra</sup> and Hadhrat Ayesha<sup>ra</sup> were all noble wives of the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup>. Hadhrat Safiya<sup>ra</sup> was of Jewish descent. Once Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> found her crying, and asked her for the reason for that. She replied, “O Messenger of Allah! Ayesha<sup>ra</sup> and Hafsa<sup>ra</sup> have said to me that they are more respected by you, because their ancestry links to yours.” He consoled her by saying, “Safiya, why didn't you tell them, ‘How can you two be better than me, when Hadhrat Haroon<sup>as</sup> was my father, Hadhrat Musa<sup>as</sup> was my uncle and Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> is my husband’?” (Tirmidhi)

### **Social Peace:**

After family peace, the next step is to focus on social peace. In a social setting, peace is broken when one party provokes or attacks another either verbally or physically. Therefore, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> quelled such propensities and admonished, ***al-Muslimo man salimal Muslimoona mil-lisaanehi wa yadehi*** (Bukhari), that is, **a Muslim is he who protects other Muslims from his tongue and hands**. He promoted social peace and brotherhood by exhorting ***laa yu'mino ahadokum hat-taa yohib-ba le akhihe ma yohi-bo le nafsehi*** (Bukhari), that is, **none among you is a true believer unless he likes for his brother what he likes for himself**. After arriving in Medina with Meccan immigrants, he promoted social peace by taking an unprecedented step of bonding each Madinite Muslim with one Meccan Muslim into brotherhood. This initiative inspired the Medinite Muslims to share everything they had with their adopted brothers thus facilitating and quickening the assimilation of the Meccan Muslims in Medina. This scheme converted the possibility of jealousy and discord into love and harmony.

Still, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> was cognizant of the possibility of conflict and tension between even the best of people. So, he admonished to reconcile quickly as he said, ***laa yahil-lo limo'minin any-yahjura akhaho fauqa thalathe ay'yam***, that is, **it is not permissible for a believer to sever relations with his brother for more than three days**. To protect the weak and the meek from the strong and the aggressive he said, **help your brother whether he is the oppressed or the oppressor**. (Bukhari) Someone asked, O Messenger of Allah, I understand helping my oppressed brother, but how can I help the oppressor? The Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> said, stop and prevent him from oppressing; that would be helping him.

Even with these principles of preventing and containing mutual conflicts and injuries, social peace cannot be maintained without the concept of forgiveness and reformation. So, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> preached and practiced the Qur'anic teaching: **The recompense of an injury is an**

**injury the like thereof; but whoso forgives and his act brings about reformation, his reward is with Allah. (Al-Shura, 42:41)**

### **Public Peace:**

Next, I will present how the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> secured public peace. In any community, public peace can be preserved if all constituents of that public are assured of equitable and just treatment by the governing system. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, ***koonoo qaw-wamoona lil-lahe shohadaa'a bil qist, wa la yajremun-nakum shana'aano qaumin alaa ta'daloo; e'deloo*** (Al-Maidah, 5:9), that is, **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.** With this principle of equity and justice, his reputation as truthful and trustworthy, and his proven peaceful nature, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> was able to unite the pagans, Jews and Muslims of Medina (including hypocrites) under one binding covenant. This was no small feat as it promoted peace and safety for all citizens of Medina despite their traditional tribal rivalries and violent behavior.

The Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> enabled public peace by providing lucid guidance on the rights and responsibilities of neighbors and strangers, rich and poor, sellers and buyers, employers and employees, rulers and ruled, etc.

To preserve public peace and protect the sanctity of life, Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, ***mun qatala nafsam beghaira nafsin au fasin fil ardhe faka annama qatalun-nasa jami'a*** (Al-Maidah, 5:33), that is, **whosoever killed a person – unless it is for killing a person or creating disorder in the land – it shall be as if he had killed all of mankind.** To prevent criminal behavior, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> enunciated proportionate consequences as deterrents, but his emphasis remained on methods of reformation.

In case of a conflict, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> emphasized peace-making without any prejudice. The Holy Qur'an says, **if two parties of believers fight ..... make peace between them with equity, and act justly.** (Al-Hujurat, 49:10-11) This principle of equity and justice equally applies in maintaining family peace and social peace also.

For public peace and harmony, Islam requires obedience to those in authority, compliance with the laws of the land, and loyalty to one's homeland.

### **Religious Peace:**

Now, I turn to the most fragile and sensitive arena of peace, the religious peace. The Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> was unique in promoting religious peace. Complying with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, despite believing in all messengers of Allah, he did not compel anyone in matters of

religion; rather towards the disbelievers he took the peaceful position, *lakum deenokum wa liya deen* (*Al-Kafirun, 109-7*), that is, **for you your religion, and for me my religion.**

Then, Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, **We did send Messengers before thee; of them are some whom We have mentioned to thee, and of them are some whom We have not mentioned to thee.** (*Al-Mumin, 40:79*) Referencing this verse, the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> writes:

**This verse admonishes the Muslims to respect and honor all past prophets in any part of the world and not to slander any prophet who had a large following. This is a wonderful and superb principle and the Muslims should rightfully be proud of it because other nations are not bound by any such principle and are quick to insult others' prophets due to trivial differences ..... This is a magnificent teaching that lays the foundation of world peace and urges all nations to be like one by respecting the elders of the others.** (*Paigham-e-Sulah, Roohani Khazain, vol. 23, p. 382-383*)

The Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> was mindful of the religious feelings of even his opponents and promoted religious tolerance. Once, a Jew claimed that God had exalted Moses<sup>as</sup> above the whole mankind. Hadhrat Abu Bakr<sup>ra</sup> responded by stating that God had exalted Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> above Moses<sup>as</sup>. The Jew complained to the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> that Abu Bakr<sup>ra</sup> had hurt his feelings. The Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> said that Abu Bakr<sup>ra</sup> should not have said so as the feelings of other people should be respected.

Another incident that shows remarkable religious tolerance by the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> happened at the time of the Treaty of Hudaibiya. It was a seminal event for peace between the Muslims and the Meccans. After the terms of the treaty had been settled, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> started to dictate the agreement to the scribe and said, "In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful." The Meccan envoy, Suhail, objected and said, "Allah we know, but what is this 'the Gracious, the Merciful?' This agreement is between two parties; therefore, religious beliefs of both parties will have to be respected." The Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> agreed at once and said to the scribe, "Only write, 'In the name of Allah'." The Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> then proceeded with the opening sentence and said, 'These are the conditions of peace between the people of Mecca and Muhammad<sup>sa</sup>, the Prophet<sup>sa</sup> of God'. Suhail objected again, and said, "If we thought you were a Prophet<sup>sa</sup> of God, we would not have fought you." The Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> accepted that objection also and instructed to write Muhammad<sup>sa</sup>, son of Abdullah.

### **National Peace:**

Despite the peaceful nature and conduct of the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup>, his foes would not leave him alone. He faced severe opposition and vicious hostilities from the moment he invited people to One God. In the beginning, it was in the form of jest and mockery that gradually turned into

socio-economic threats and ultimatums, verbal and physical abuse, total isolation, and brutal violence. Describing the 13 year Meccan period of torment, the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> writes:

**Many of God's faithful—the very honor of humanity—were cruelly cut to pieces by the swords of these barbarians. Orphans and weak helpless women were slaughtered in the streets and alleys. Even so, God commanded that there be no retaliation against evil. These righteous, chosen people adhered to this instruction precisely. While the streets ran red with their blood, they did not utter a sound. They were slaughtered like animals but did not protest. God's holy and exalted Prophet (upon whom the heavens and earth shower their blessings) was stoned on many occasions, so much so that he was stained with blood. Nevertheless, that upright mountain of truth tolerated all this mistreatment with an open heart and love. (*British Government and Jihad*)**

Finally, when the Meccans conspired to kill the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup>, he decided to leave Mecca, under divine revelation, and search for peace in Medina. This escape infuriated the Meccans even more and they decided to attack and annihilate the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> and his handful of companions in Medina. It was then that God gave permission to the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> to fight back for self-defense and a just cause. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

**Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged ..... those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Lord is Allah' – And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. (*Al-Hajj, 22:40-41*)**

Even though it was a permission for physical retaliation, that would cause violence and bloodshed, it was not only justified on the basis of self-defense, it was also essential to protect and preserve peace and the freedom to practice one's religion – the ultimate object of peace. Regarding war and peace, Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II<sup>ra</sup>, writes:

**Islam forbids aggression, but it urges us to fight if failure to fight jeopardizes peace and promotes war. If failure to fight means the extirpation of free belief and of the search of truth, it is our duty to fight. This is the teaching on which peace can ultimately be built, and this is the teaching on which the Prophet<sup>sa</sup> based his own policies and practice. (*Life of Muhammad<sup>sa</sup>, 170-171*)**

Despite this just and essential permission to retaliate, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> was a peaceful man at heart. He sought to negotiate a peaceful solution before every battle. He never initiated any fight nor ever relished one. He was never revengeful rather he grieved over the tragic end of the vanquished. After the historic victory in the Battle of Badr, when many famous Meccan chiefs perished, many others laid handcuffed before the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup>. Instead of celebrating

his triumph over the vicious enemy, he grieved over their pitiable plight and tears rolled in his eyes. Hadhrat Umar<sup>ra</sup> was perplexed over this paradox and asked him why he was weeping in victory. The Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> pointed to the miserable plight of the Meccans and said that was what their disobedience to God led to.

When he was forced to fight, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> fought with divine rules of engagement, disengagement and containment that were peaceful at their core. Here are some of those rules as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:

**Fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. (Al-Baqarah, 2:191)**

**And if they incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it, and put thy trust in Allah. (Al-Anfal, 8:62)**

**O ye who believe! When you go forth in the cause of Allah, make proper investigation and say not to anyone who greets you with the greeting of peace, "Thou art not a believer." (Al-Nisa, 4:95)**

**Say to those who disbelieve, if they desist, that which is past will be forgiven them; and if they return thereto, then verily the example of the former people has already gone before them. And fight them until there is no persecution and religion is wholly for Allah. (Al-Anfal, 8:39-40)**

**Excepting those of the idolaters with whom you have entered into a treaty and who have not subsequently failed you in anything nor aided anyone against you. So fulfill to these the treaty you have made with them till their term. Surely, Allah loves those who are righteous. (Al-Tauba, 9:4)**

Thus, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> fought without transgression, ceased fighting when the enemy laid down arms, ascertained the facts before any fight, forgave past atrocities, and lived by his treaties.

The finest demonstration of the peaceful and merciful nature of the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> was the general amnesty at the Fall of Mecca. He walked into Mecca, with ten thousand followers, without spilling a drop of blood and completely sparing the lives of cruel and barbaric Meccans who had relentlessly tormented him and his followers. And, thus he avenged his and his followers' insults and injuries and established peace in Arabia.

In summary, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> demonstrated how to establish personal, family, social, public, religious, and national peace. In this process, he enunciated the golden principles and policies

of durable peace for all mankind to follow. He indeed was the Messenger of Peace and Reconciliation; nay he was *rahmatul-lil-alameen*, that is, **mercy for all the worlds**.

**O Allah! Bless Muhammad and his people as Thou didst bless Abraham and his people; Thou art indeed the Praiseworthy, the Exalted.**

**O Allah! Prosper Muhammad and his people as Thou didst prosper Abraham and his people; Thou art indeed the Praiseworthy, the Exalted.**