

## **ISLAM: A RELIGION OF PEACE OR FORCE? AN ANALYSIS BASED ON THE QUR'ĀN SUNNAH AND ISLAM'S HERITAGE**

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We establish that Islam is a religion that sustains peace and catalyses universal harmony. This paper offers qualitative content analysis of Muslim Scripture to clarify that peace is integral to Islamic doctrine. Interpretations by reliable exegetes articulate that this is fact from Scripture and *Sunnah*. We offer views from notable Western scholars who clearly state that Islam is a peaceful religion and was never spread at the point of sword, but rather as a creed without any imposition of fear or fanaticism. The author also explores Islam's substantial contributions to a sustainable environment of global peace.

**Keywords:** *Conversion, Force, Peace, Religion, Sword.*

### **Introduction**

Islam appears to be the most misunderstood religion in the world, particularly in educated Western sectors. Easterners are hardly better. Both schools of speculation make assumptions and cradle misconceptions that Islam is dangerous, forceful, fanatical, harmful and prone to violence. The global tendency is to broadcast Muslims as felons who compel people from different cultures and traditions to accept Islam by all means. An example is propaganda from anti-Islamic Hindu militants of the Hindutva<sup>1</sup> movement, as promoted by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS),<sup>2</sup> the paramilitary wing of the India's current ruling party.

Generally, this has become typical of globalized post-modern secular societies. Deliberately and not, the mass media also contributes to false impressions with utter fabrications, generally because the media is directly or indirectly controlled by Islam's enemies. Further, some orientalist seem dedicated to the advancement of lies that favour colonial imperialists.

Some claim Islam was spread on the point of sword. By so saying, they sow seeds of enmity and confusion. The lie continues a tangible bias that unfortunately self-perpetuates. While many subscribe to the calumny, others disagree and advocate this was never the case and provide convincing arguments to the contrary.

Hence, the present writer raises questions and provides answers. Is Islam a religion of peace or of force? Does it condone violence, propagate intolerance, oppress those of other faiths and employ force for conversion? Was it spread on the point of sword? Are Muslims peace-loving or violence prone? Many contemporaries want answers, especially since Islam is presently and publicly marked by violence, and portrayed as antagonistic to global peace and equanimity. Western media and secular sources project Islam as aggressive, oppressive, repressive and hostile. Such sources tacitly or clandestinely operate in collusion, not only in the West but also within the Arab-Muslim world where there is a sincere quest for knowledge and understanding of Islam's history, worldview, culture and civilization.

In addition to Islam's deconstruction, many Westerners propagate ideas, formulate theories, propound philosophies, disseminate false textual interpretations, sponsor questionable agencies, and exhibit Islam in unkind terms by referring to horrible wars fought by Muslim nations. Some orientalists nurture these misconceptions and purposely spread misperceptions among people of other faiths and belief systems. They often refer to Islam's guidance on capital punishment as proof of Islam's merciless intent and peace deficit; marking Muslims as barbaric, irrational, unscientific, illogical, and non-humanitarian, and Islam as an uncivilized religion and a way of life. Islam has been portrayed as anti-modern, anti-secular, anti-development, anti-liberal, anti-global, anti-democratic, and anti-West; all of which implicitly inspire hate and distance Muslims from humanitarian embrace without warmth, trust or collaborative cooperation.

Since the allegations and the fiendish branding cited are exceedingly harmful, unwarranted, dangerous and deconstructive, we deemed it appropriate to conduct this study. Hence, we present findings gleaned from exceptionally informed scholars of the Qur'ān and the biography of Prophet's (ﷺ) to clarify issues raised by poorly informed critics. Qualitative content analysis regarding peace as an integral component of Islamic doctrine refers to reliable exegeses to enlarge the concept of peace as articulated in the Qur'ān and Prophet's Example, along with Islam's historical contributions to the sustainable development of world peace. We thus explore the truth of Islam and present its fundamental precepts,

principles and values to a global audience. With due respect, this effort is offered to educate and enable a better understanding and appreciation of the true nature and authentic purpose of Islam. The author hopes to catalyse greater harmony and understanding within and without the Muslim community.

### Terms '*Islâm*' and '*Salâm*'

The term '*Islâm*' has been wrongly associated with violence or force. Its literal meaning refers to submission, surrender and peaceful reconciliation, especially with regard to compliance with divine directives. Authentic Muslims adhere to Qur'ân and Prophet's Example and are required to obey these directives with absolute worship of God alone. This specific obedience requires their application of 'revealed law' without reservation, dissension or disorder. The word *aslim*, as written in the Qur'ân, means to 'submit'. It is used as follows: "When his Lord said to him, 'Submit yourself', he said, 'I have submitted myself to the Lord of all the worlds.'" <sup>3</sup> Thus, it is peaceful submission to God without resistance, remonstrance, reservation or rebellion.

The term '*salâm*' has a tripartite term origin in sa, li and ma, taken together to mean 'peace.' *Salâm* is an attribute of God: "He is God; there is no deity other than Him, the Sovereign, the Holy, the Source of Peace, the Giver of Faith, the Guardian over all, the Almighty, the Compeller, to whom all greatness belongs." <sup>4</sup> Sayyid Quṭb wrote:

This attribution as 'the source of Peace'; radiates peace, security and reassurance throughout the universe and within man's soul. Man feels safer under God's care and protection, and at peace with the world around him and all its dwellers. As man reflects on this attribution he is reassured, regaining a sense of peace while extending peace to all. <sup>5</sup>

When properly employed, Islam's religiously oriented way of life prescribes a formula that establishes comprehensive social harmony and peace. The Qur'ân emphasizes the importance of peace and security as does the Prophetic literature. Since Muslims reverence example of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) example as a pious way of human living, they naturally uphold it and attempt to actualize his traditions and sayings in all aspects of their lives. Establishing peace is thus of paramount importance, amounting to a prime objective that the majority of Muslims faithfully strive to achieve in all social relations regardless of environment and circumstance.

The Prophet's Example urges Muslims to be generous when offering food to others and to initiate each greeting with 'peace' (*salâm*) to those they know and do not know. The Prophetic Tradition states:

Narrated Abdullah bin 'Amr (May Allah be pleased with him): A man asked the Prophet (ﷺ), "What Islamic traits are the best?" The Prophet said, "Feed the people, and greet those whom you know and those whom you do not know"<sup>6</sup>

The Tradition of the Prophet (ﷺ) indicates a certain magnanimity that is required of all Muslims. Hospitality is virtuous because it bridges gaps between people with differences. It is nothing less than a conscientious attempt to avoid hostilities, cruelty of thought, enmity and antagonism. Offering food strengthens human bonds and is why hospitality is highly valued in Islam. Hence, our religion of peace universally calls for the provision of food as one of several ways to maintain social harmony via selfless generosity. When basic human needs are satisfied after mindful attendance, greed and envy, which otherwise make way for restive unease, flee and have no seat at counsel.

Another Prophetic Tradition says a true Muslim is he or she whom other Muslims feel secure against abuse and attack from either tongue or hand. The Prophetic Tradition is: "Abu Musa al-Asha'ri (R.A.) reported: I asked the Messenger of Allah (May peace and blessings be upon him): Who is the most excellent among the Muslims?" He said, "One from whose tongue and Hands the other Muslims are secure."<sup>7</sup> This shows that Muslims are required to maintain peace by guaranteeing security and protection. However, this general formula does not mean that non-Muslims are deprived of security and peace but rather that they are secured and protected by the principle of peace inherent in the religion's self-descriptive terms. Moreover, since Islam is essentially a religion of peace, Muslims must therefore engage in doing what is beneficial by commanding righteousness and by avoiding or forbidding what is malicious all for the sake of peace and tranquillity. In the process of promoting and advancing peace, therefore, force or violence is to be avoided.

The Prophetic Tradition clarifies that authentic Muslims do not oppress other Muslims and do not hand them over to oppressors. Muslims are also commanded to fulfil the needs of other Muslims regardless of circumstances. Does this not indicate peace? Indeed, the Qur'ân and many Prophetic Traditions explicitly indicate a global vision of universal

peace. Islam's key fundamental principles include stability, mutual respect and non-aggression.

### Peace in the Qur'ān

For Muslims, the Qur'ān is God's revealed guidance. It distinctly advocates peaceful means in all circumstances except defence. It encourages peace even when confronted by ignorant, uncivilized, irrational or hostile people, publicly and privately. The Qur'ān states: "And the servants of (Allah) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, "Peace!"<sup>8</sup> Sayyid Quṭb remarks on such 'servants of God':

In their serious and dignified approach, and in their attention to serious concerns, God's true servants do not bother themselves with other people's absurdities and stupidities. They do not waste their time or energy in futile arguments with such people. They recognize that engaging in an argument with people who argue for argument's sake is fruitless. Hence, "*whenever the ignorant address them, [they] say: Peace.*"<sup>9</sup> ... But this is by no means a sign of weakness or lack of ability. It is simply a more dignified approach that does not permit the waste of time or energy over what is unbecoming of the honourable. Such is their conduct when they are with other people.<sup>10</sup>

God says: "And when they hear vain talk, they turn away therefrom and say: "To us our deeds, and to you yours; peace be to you: we seek not the ignorant."<sup>11</sup>

Quṭb wrote:

Believing hearts do not engage in idle talk, nor listen to it. They are preoccupied with the requirements of their faith and revel in its light and purity: "*And whenever they hear frivolous talk, they turn away from it.*" They are not provoked to reply in kind. They neither join those who are given to frivolous, idle talk nor enter into a slanging match with them. Instead, they leave malcontents alone, maintaining an attitude of decency and peace: "*To us our deeds and to you yours. Peace be to you.*"<sup>12</sup> ... Thus, they observe the

highest standard of propriety, saying a kindly prayer, but making clear that they do not wish to share in such behaviour: “*We will have nothing to do with ignorant folk,*”<sup>13</sup> and “*We do not wish to waste our precious time, match them in their idle talk, or even listen to it.*”<sup>14</sup>

### **Does Islam Permit Forceful Conversion?**

Authentic Islam embraces method of moderation (*manhaj al-wastiyyah*) in everything as a fundamental principle. We therefore assert that the enemies of Islam and universal justice have done nothing less than fabricate history and impugn Islam by claiming it was spread by force. Without knowing the truth, people read unreliable sources filled with interpolations and unauthentic material penned by vested-interest groups sponsored by a global network of anti-religious zealots, which includes post-modernists, post-structuralists and poorly informed liberals. Hence, people who learn Islam from poisoned sources are misled and filled with negative ideas that foment discord. One hardly finds ways and means to access truthful information due to an enormous flux of social media that is committed to secular think-tanks purposed to subvert human decency and destroy Islam. The greater majority of western historians have reached false conclusions drawn from deconstructionists and secular historians who draw on the hermeneutics of vested colonial perspectives. We decisively assert this bias was passed on from forged and fabricated archives. As such, they represent a gross liability for all humankind considering such wicked ambitions. These are best ignored and rejected while their ideas are exposed as worthless contaminants of a truly human legacy.

Islam was never spread at the point of sword because there is no need for force. Besides, Islamic doctrines exclude all compulsion in matters of religion. The revealed scripture is categorically against forced conversion. The Qur’ān says: “Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error; whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things.”<sup>15</sup>

Islam, undoubtedly the most enlightened view of life and the world, establishes the most sensible of human social systems, and takes the lead by declaring this most fundamental principle. It teaches its adherents, before anyone else, that they are forbidden to compel others to embrace Islam. This Islamic approach stands in total contrast to that of man-made

systems and regimes which, in addition to inherent shortcomings, impose beliefs and policies by force of state and deny opponents the right to dissent or even live. The Arabic text, using a generic negative, imparts a negation of the very idea of compulsion. When it comes to matters of belief, not only should these never be imposed by coercion or compulsion, but there cannot even be an option to use such a means of conversion or persuasion.<sup>16</sup>

Regarding the same verse (*al-Baqarah* 25: 6), Austrian convert Muḥammad Asad wrote:

On the strength of the above categorical prohibition of coercion (*ikrāḥ*) in anything that pertains to faith or religion, all Islamic jurists (*fuqahā'*), without exception, hold that forcible conversion is, under all circumstances, null and void, and that any attempt at coercing a non-believer to accept the faith of Islam is a grievous sin: a verdict which disposes of the widespread fallacy that Islam places before unbelievers the alternative of "*conversion or the sword*".<sup>17</sup>

The Qur'ān further states:

Say, "*The Truth is from your Lord*": let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject (it): for the wrongdoers We have prepared a Fire whose (smoke and flames), like the wall and roof of a tent, will hem them in: if they implore relief they will be granted water like melted brass that will scald their faces. How dreadful the drink! How uncomfortable a couch to recline on!"<sup>18</sup>

This verse and others make it transparently clear that no compulsion in religion is allowed and that no one is to be forced against his/her will to convert to Islam. *Faith* (*īmān*) must be established and concretised in oneself based on true knowledge of religion and free will. It cannot be based on coercion or force. Further, *faith* requires firm conviction from the heart followed by testimony (*shahādah*). Hence, saying Islam is a religion of force or compulsion or coercion is myth and scientific fallacy, an intellectual absurdity in the face of texts commanding the contrary. Muslims are to behave with moderation while upholding justice in all human relations, most especially in the matter of faith. Whosoever advances that '*Islam was/is spread on the point of sword*' should

access genuine Islamic sources to comprehend the truth and not rely on hearsay from unreliable writers, bogus journalists and biased researchers, particularly western historians.

### **Did Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) Use Force?**

Since deceptive accusations are disagreeable and damaging to Islam's image as a citadel of civilization and true religion, and of everlasting and eternal celestial peace for the universe, it is important to evaluate how the Prophet (ﷺ) spread Islam in Mecca and Medina. Muḥammad (pbh) remained in Mecca for thirteen years after the revelation and commission to warn and admonish everyone regarding the truth. Accordingly, he engaged all possible ways and means to communicate the message, even in the face of false accusations, slander, persecution, harassment, boycotts, threats, attacks and brutal physical aggression by Arab pagans. Those who believed in his prophethood and struggle shared his suffering and sacrifice. Since Muḥammad (ﷺ) had not been divinely directed to use violence or aggression, his companions persevered and suffered; they upheld the truth and tolerated persecution while adhering to precepts of a mission of peace. Indeed, many Muslims were brutally and mercilessly tortured and not a few were martyred with a view to pleasing God and obtaining eternal mercy. They never once resorted to violence but persevered, believing that each step of torture brought its reward in the afterlife. Indeed, the early seventh century history of Mecca irrefutably testifies to this effect.

Verifiable accounts confirm that early Muslims in Mecca were subjected to torture and persecution by the tribe of Quraysh who held power in Mecca. However, the Prophet never commanded his followers to react negatively or with violence. He did encourage migration to Ethiopia to escape their antagonists. Meccan Muslims then sought refuge with the Christian Negus in Ethiopia who eventually accepted Islam after hearing a partial recitation of *Sûrat Maryam* of the Qur'ân. As made apparent in his and other Prophet's Example, God, commanded patience and tolerance rather than violence. Early Muslims were directed towards mercy, graciousness, magnanimity, hospitality, kindness, benefaction and compassion even in the face of continual violence and aggression by idol worshipping Meccans:

Therefore, patiently persevere, as did (all) messengers of inflexible purpose; and be in no haste about the (Unbelievers). On the Day

that they see the (Punishment) promised them, (it will be) as if they had not tarried more than an hour in a single day. (Thine but) to proclaim the Message: but shall any be destroyed except those who transgress?<sup>19</sup>

Despite inhumane and untiring persecution, the Prophet (ﷺ) graciously continued his peaceful religious activities and steadfastly propagated the divine message of Islam. He did seek help from tribes who were overjoyed with the prospect of extending support and defending him and his companions from Quraysh brutality and outrage. The Prophet (ﷺ) simply presented God's message and explained his mission to those who visited him in Mecca; quietly and modestly without offending communal sensitivities, honour or prestige.

A delegation from Medina arrived and voluntarily expressed belief in the divine message. They extended an unconditional pledge of allegiance to support and defend Muḥammad (ﷺ); offering wealth and honour should he and his companions migrate to Medina, the city that became the pivotal and historical centre of Islam. This marked the founding of a new civilisation that promoted universal brotherhood long before the Marxian fraud. On hearing the Prophet's decision to migrate, Quraysh leaders decided to assassinate him. Even then Muḥammad (ﷺ) did not react nor retaliate but remained determined to migrate in peace. No sign of anger was ever accounted to him. Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his companions never shed a drop of blood in retribution or revenge throughout all the years of persecutions and oppressions in Mecca. He followed a divine command to remain patient and at peace. The armed struggle did not begin until two years after the migration and only then after the Quraysh were discomfited by Islam's growth, which accelerated their persecutions. He took up the sword only after all avenues of peaceful rapprochement had been exhausted.

Another point to register is that in all the battles fought over a period of twenty-three years, only three hundred and seventy-five people were killed. This was because Muḥammad (ﷺ) purposed not to kill the innocent and responded only to the pagan arrogance that was fixed on destroying his mission. In the ninth year of Islam's calendar, the Prophet (ﷺ) received several delegations from all over the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>20</sup> The Prophet (ﷺ) magnanimously received them and responded to all enquiries regarding Islam's creed, doctrines and laws.

History records that he despatched letters to all leaders in neighbouring regions in which he peacefully and respectfully called on

them to accept Islam. The Prophet (ﷺ) always extended the hand of peace when disseminating the message of Islam. Likewise, all interactions with him were peaceful in nature and form. Islam, the revealed religion of peace, required that he and his companions never ever proselytize with any intent of violence. This was unknown to them. They never initiated offensive attacks, assaults, expeditions, battles or wars. Thus, we assert and document that without doubt, the era of the Prophet (ﷺ) was an era of peace and tranquillity that led to social stability and cohesion, followed by security and harmony.

### **Muhammad's Historical Peace Treaty**

The Hudaibiyah Treaty between the Prophet (ﷺ) and Quraysh leaders in Mecca was agreed on in the sixth year of Islam. After years of self-exile, the Prophet (ﷺ) returned to Mecca to perform 'Umrah. When he and his companions reached Hudaibiyah, the Quraysh told them not to enter Mecca or there would be war. Muhammad (ﷺ) replied by saying he had come on ritual pilgrimage with no other motive. He asked permission to enter but Quraysh leaders were determined not to allow him and his companions to enter Mecca. They suggested he return the following year and promised him entry without resistance. On hearing this, Muhammad (ﷺ) agreed and immediately called for the signing of a treaty. The Quraysh agreed. Terms and conditions were listed that mostly favoured the Quraysh. However, the Prophet (ﷺ) consented because he wanted peace rather than war, even though his companions were dissatisfied with a unilateral accord. This is Islam. To establish peace, Muhammad (ﷺ) surrendered his own wishes. Contemporary Muslims can take a lesson from this example and apply its spirit for the sole aim of establishing and sustaining amity. Peace is Islam's priority and should be kept as a fundamental priority for any charter when approaching disputes.<sup>21</sup>

### **Western Views on Islam as a Religion of Peace**

Despite numerous acerbic remarks founded on biased perceptions of Islam's worldview, jurisprudence and culture, many adherents accept Islam of their own will without force by any entity be it individual, organization or state. We are obliged to refer to the comments of authorities who transparently and sincerely declared that Islam is

undoubtedly a religion of peace and entirely absent force, menace or violence.

Islam was never spread by the sword. This Christian revert to Islam noted that millions accept Islam without coercion. He acknowledges that Islam is found in every nook and cranny of the globe where people accept it as a complete and comprehensive way of life with the objective of sustaining peace and harmony at all levels of society while also rejecting bigotry and the extremist mania of fanatics. This is made possible only when Islam is accepted under peaceful circumstances. No one follows a religion that is sustained by fear and the sword. The allegation is myth a concocted narrative.

Norman A Daniel<sup>22</sup> remarks on the origin of this fabrication: *"The West formed a more or less invariable canon of beliefs about Islam; it decided for itself what Islam was... in so doing, it gave Christendom a sense of self-respect when dealing with a puzzling civilization"*<sup>23</sup> He says the myth of Islam's dissemination by the sword is propaganda fabricated by idiocentric vested interests who despise peace and wish to divert global attention, persuading the world to dislike Islam and distance itself.

De Lacy O' Leary,<sup>24</sup> a British orientalist, also commented on the fallacy: *"History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of a sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated."*<sup>25</sup> This honest and objective assessment sits amidst a plethora of Western misrepresentations. He courageously disclosed the truth, regardless of consequence, and openly accuses historians of fabrications, declaring it one of the most absurd myths ever mindlessly repeated. It seems historians did not verify substance but rather perpetuated unilateral bias; thus, generating perpetual discord and dissension, which is unethical and unforgivable. Western historians are categorically responsible for the lie.

Gustav Le Bon<sup>26</sup> wrote the following:

Force was never a factor in the spread of the Koranic teachings. Moreover, Arabs left those they had subdued free to exercise their religious beliefs. If it happened that some Christian peoples embraced Islam and adopted Arabic as their language, it was mainly due to examples of justice exercised by Arab victors, the likes of which non-Moslems were not acquainted. It was also

due to the tolerance and leniency of Islam, which was hitherto unknown to other religions.<sup>27</sup>

When Muslims took the land of others, they left the conquered free to practice their own beliefs. People who did embrace Islam also accepted the Arabic language because of Arab justice. Le Bon further asserts:

The early Caliphs ... were remarkably kind in the way they treated ... every country they subdued. Leaving people free to practice their own laws, regulations and beliefs, imposing only a small *Jizyah* [tax] in return for protection and the keeping of domestic peace. In truth, these nations had never known merciful and tolerant conquerors such as the Arabs.<sup>28</sup>

This laudable remark is a milestone showing that Islam was never regarded as violent or vengeful. Early Caliphs were kind and compassionate to non-Muslims and allowed them to follow their own belief systems and laws based on respective religious understanding and worldview. As Le Bon reports, those nations never knew such merciful, tolerant, kind, compassionate and benevolent conquerors. This acknowledgement deserves appreciation by historians and other western writers.

Le Bon implies that Arab conquerors were honest, humble, humanitarian, just and fair, and never forced non-Muslims to embrace Islam. He rebuts the claim that Islam was spread by force and violence. Indian historians and Orientalists have also acknowledged that Islam was not spread in India at the point of sword. However, *Hindutva* historians, influenced by RSS philosophy and ideology, have fabricated an utterly false history of Indian Muslims.

Thomas Carlyle<sup>29</sup> wrote:

Much has been said of Mahomet's propagation of his religion by the sword. It is, however, no doubt far nobler than what we have to boast of the Christian Religion, in that Islam propagated itself peaceably in the way of preaching and conviction. Yet with all, if we take this for an argument of the truth or falsehood of a religion, there is a radical mistake ..."<sup>30</sup>

Carlyle disagrees with those who claim that Islam was spread by the sword. For him, Islam's spread was far nobler than Christian efforts.

There was no bloodshed when Islam spread in Spain after its conquest. Thomas Arnold,<sup>31</sup> another writer, agrees:

... Of any organized attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on non-Muslim populations, or of any systematic persecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion we hear nothing. Had the caliphs chosen to adopt either course of action, they might have swept away as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain, or Louis XIV made Protestantism penal in France, or the Jews were kept out of England for 350 years. The Eastern Churches in Asia were entirely cut off from communion with the rest of Christendom throughout Islam, and no one would have been found to lift a finger on their behalf, as heretical communions. So, the very survival of these Churches to the present day is a strong proof of the generally tolerant attitude of Muḥammadan [sic] governments towards them.<sup>32</sup>

This testimony gives evidence that Muslims were tolerant, particularly towards Christians. Neither force nor persecution were observed in any attempt to spread Islam. Islam spread naturally. Reference is made to Christian and Jewish experiences. Accordingly, Christianity attempted to drive Islam out of Spain by force and Jews were kept out of England for more than three centuries by force. Plainly, Christians were far crueller than Muslims or Jews. The Eastern churches remain intact in Asia, which is robust evidence that Muslims never attempted to destroy them.

Lis Lichtenstadter, a German scholar, wrote:

The option given to the people of Persia and Rome or the West, during the time of the spread of Islam, was '*not to be killed by the sword or accept Islam*'. In fact, the option was either to accept Islam as a way of life or pay the head tax in exchange for protection. This praiseworthy plan was applied later on in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth.<sup>33</sup>

Hence, the spread of Islam throughout history was never by force. This testifies of Muslim character and Islamic ethics. Muslims never intended to subdue, oppress or kill conquered people, unlike Christians who did quite the contrary in conquered lands. Thousands of non-Christians

were killed in Spain and many were converted to Christianity by threat of force. However, during Muslim rule, people were absolutely free to choose between Islam as a way of life or pay tax (*jizyah*) to Muslim authorities for protection. This same system was later used by others, including Queen Elizabeth. Muslim strategy when dealing with 'others' is always based on the sustainability of peace and harmony. Humanitarianism is always translated into practise.

In *Whither Islam*, Gibb<sup>34</sup> wrote the following:

Islam has still further service to render in the cause of humanity. It stands, after all, nearer to the real East than Europe does, and it possesses a magnificent tradition of inter-racial understanding and cooperation. No other society has such a record of success uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity, and of endeavours, so many and so various races of mankind . . . Islam has still the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of East and West is to be replaced by cooperation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition. In its hands lies very largely the solution of the problem with which Europe is faced in its relation with East. If they unite, the hope of a peaceful issue is immeasurably enhanced. But if Europe, by rejecting the cooperation of Islam, throws it into the arms of its rivals, the issue can only be disastrous for both.<sup>35</sup>

Gibb's message is sound counsel. Unbiased, fair and courageous, he articulates a useful solution for all of humanity. His analysis objectively states that Islam can undoubtedly contribute to world peace and declares that Islam's remarkable traditions promote inter-racial understanding and universal cooperation. What is most astonishing are his claims that Islam can reconcile what appear to be irreconcilable elements of race and tradition and contains solutions for occidental problems. He implies that should Europe unite with Islam and formulate strategy, there is hope of enhancing world peace; but if it rejects Islam, Europe will throw itself into disaster. Gibb's frank transparency clearly marks Islam as a civilizational system with extraordinary traditions and values that admirably manage inter-racial and cultural strife with a view to establish global peace; that it is a way of life that excludes extremism on principle. His analysis is based on unbiased and extensive research of authentic Islam without any sign of vested interest. He went to the sources to identify

truth. Unlike many authors, he did not rely on secondary or inauthentic sources in his study of Islam.

George Bernard Shaw<sup>36</sup> assessed Islam fairly. He studied Prophet Muḥammad's biography, digested Islam's message in an attempt to find solutions for human problems. Having thoroughly reviewed Islam, he concluded that humanity needed Prophet Muḥammad's guidance. Following WWII, in which more than 70–80 million people were killed, he commented: *"If Mohammed was among us now, he would solve all the problems of humanity while having a cup of coffee."*<sup>37</sup> He went on to write:

I have always held the religion of Muḥammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him that wonderful man and in my opinion, far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the Saviour 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: I have prophesied about the faith of Muḥammad that it would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today.<sup>38</sup>

This informed opinion should be sincerely accounted for by historians, diplomats, historians and authors who serve western imperial interests and prosecute Islam and Muslims in the present era. Those who accuse Islam should contemplate Shaw's profound statement, which implies that universal peace and happiness are to be found in Islam. He soundly refutes modern sceptics. Had Islam been spread on the point of a sword he would not have made such remarks. The modern world would solve its problems if we follow the Prophet's methods.

## Conclusion

This qualitative content analysis of sacred texts established that peace is integral to the teachings of Islam. Our referrals to reliable and trustworthy exegetes clearly confirmed this from both scripture and traditional Sunnah. We also demonstrated Islam's future potential and historic contributions to the development and sustainability of world peace. Our discourse thus allows us to conclude that Islam is undoubtedly a religion of peace and not force because its fundamental principles and values catalyse social harmony for all of humankind.

We showed that the Arabic terms, *salâm* and *islâm*, convey ‘peace’ linguistically and etymologically. Hence, the very name of the religion Muslims follow, means ‘peace’, so that Muslims call on nothing other than peace in every matter, great and small. This is obvious in the following text: “*And the servants of (Allah) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, “Peace!”*”<sup>39</sup> Hence, Muslims are to remain at peace even when facing ignorant and arrogant persons who address them with insolence, pride, ostentation and even violence; all of which give rise to social discord.

This paper highlighted views from commentators on Qur’ānic verses relating to peace. We also referred to Prophetic Traditions that address the importance of peace in the lives of Muslims. In addition, we provided documented accounts of the Prophet’s dealings with non-Muslims for the sake of peace in Medina and Mecca. Prophet Muḥammad’s social and political relations have been meticulously recorded and demonstrate that the establishment of peace was always his primary concern. The discussion integrated views from informed Western scholars and historians who perceived Islam as a religion peace that was never spread on the point of a sword. These included Thomas Arnold, Thomas Carlyle, Gibb and George Bernard Shaw, all revered authorities so that western readers, in particular, would better appreciate that Islam was never spread by force or war.

The author recommends the following measures. Muslims must inform their communities that Islam is absolutely devoted to peace and has no place for violence or force. Working examples should be given by leadership to establish this by their example. Second, efforts must be made to eradicate erroneous teaching and misunderstandings regarding Islam as anything other than a religion of peace that eschews violence and force. Third, Muslims must exhibit commendable character and attributes that promote peace by engaging in community services to help the needy, downtrodden and destitute. Fourth, non-Muslims, whether majority or minority, must be treated with compassion, gentleness and fairness regardless of circumstances. This will soften their view of Islam, leaving them with positive sentiments. Fifth, Muslims must not resort to violence or revenge against so-called ‘enemies of Islam’. This only provides its enemies with perplexing opportunities to learn about the true religion of peace and better appreciate Islam. Sixth, it is important that Muslims adopt the Prophet’s kind-hearted manner of dealing with

everyone. The major social objective of Islam is to promote peace, nothing but peace.

### Notes and References

1. Hindutva (Hindu-ness): a term popularised by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1923, is a predominant form of Hindu nationalism championed by nationalist volunteer organisations: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishva Hindu Parishad, and Hindu Sena. Many Indian social scientists describe the Hindutva movement as fascist, adhering to the concept of homogenised majority and cultural hegemony. According to Oxford English Dictionary, Hindutva is the state or quality of being Hindu; 'Hinduness'. In later use, it defines Hindutva as an ideology seeking to establish the hegemony of Hindus and the Hindu way of life.
2. It is an Indian right-wing, Hindu nationalist, paramilitary volunteer organisation that is widely regarded as the parent organisation of the ruling party of India, the Bharatiya Janata Party. The RSS is one of the principal organizations of the *Sangh Parivar* group. Founded on 27 September 1925, it claimed a commitment to selfless service to India.
3. Qur'ân, *al-Baqarah*: 131.
4. Qur'ân, *al-Hashr*: 23.
5. Sayyid Quṭb, *In the Shade of the Qur'ân*, Vol. 17, 447.
6. Sunnah.com. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhârî*, 6236, Book 79, Ḥadīth 10, Vol. 8, Book 74, Ḥadīth 253.
7. Sunnah.com. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhârî and Muslim*, Book 18, Ḥadīth 2, Book 18, Ḥadīth 1512.
8. Qur'ân, *al-Furqân*: 63.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Quṭb, *In the Shade of the Qur'ân*, 342.
11. Qur'ân, *al-Qaṣaṣ* : 55.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. Quṭb, *In the Shade of the Qur'ân*, Vol. 13, 198.
15. Qur'ân, *al-Baqarah*: 256.
16. *Ibid.*, 349.
17. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ân*, 58.
18. Qur'ân, *al-Kahf*: 29.
19. Qur'ân, *al-Aḥqâf*: 35.
20. Some of the noteworthy delegations were: Daws delegation, the Suda' delegation, the 'Udhrah delegation, the Bali delegation, the Thaqif delegation, the Hamdan delegation, the Delegation of Bani Fazarah, the Najran delegation, the Bani Hanifah delegation, the delegation of Bani Amir ibn Sa'sa'ah, the Tujeeb delegation, the Thai' delegation, and others. See: Safiur-Rahman al Mubarakpuri, *The Sealed Nectar Biography of the Noble Prophet*, (Riyadh: Darussalam, Revised Edition, 2002), 386-396.

21. Martin Lings, *Muhammad his life based on the earliest sources*, (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 5<sup>th</sup> Revised edn., 1994), 253-256.
22. Norman Daniels, born in 1942, is an American political philosopher and philosopher of science, political theorist, ethicist, and bioethicist at Harvard University. Before his career at Harvard, Daniels had built his career as a medical ethicist at Tufts University School of Medicine, also in Boston.
23. Daniel NA (nd). *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*. In *ibid.*, 270.
24. The Reverend Doctor De Lacy Evans O'Leary was a British Orientalist who lectured at the University of Bristol and wrote a number of books on the early history of Arabs and Copts. Born: October 3, 1872, Devon, United Kingdom
25. De Lacy Evans O'Leary (1925). *Islam at the Cross Road*. *Ibid.*, 8.
26. Gustave Le Bon (French); (7 May 1841 – 13 December 1931) was a French social psychologist, sociologist, anthropologist, inventor, and amateur physicist. He is best known for his 1895 work *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*. His writings incorporate theories of national traits, racial and male superiority, herd behaviour and crowd psychology. Le Bon began his writing career working in the new field of anthropology. In the 1870s he invented a pocket cephalometer, or as he called it, a "Compass of Coordinates", which was an instrument that allowed one to quickly measure the head's various angles, diameters, and profiles.
27. Gustave Le Bon. *Civilization of the Arabs*, 127–128, paraphrased from Dr. ID Khalil's *What they say about Islam?* 24, in *Islam is the Religion of Peace*.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Thomas Carlyle (4 December 1795 – 5 February 1881) was a Scottish philosopher, satirical writer, essayist, historian and teacher. His famous work *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* explains that the key role in history lies in the actions of the "Great Man," claiming that "History is nothing but the biography of the Great Man." A respected historian, his 1837 book *The French Revolution: A History was the inspiration for Dickens' 1859 novel A Tale of Two Cities*, and remains popular today. Carlyle's 1836 *Sartor Resartus* is considered one of the finest works of the nineteenth century.
30. Thomas Carlyle. "Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History," Lecture II, Friday (08 May 1840). Quoted in *Islam is the Religion of Peace*, p. 25–26. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* by Thomas Carlyle, James Fraser, London, 1841.
31. Sir Thomas Walker Arnold (1864–1930) was a British orientalist and historian of Islamic art who taught at Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh Muslim University (then Aligarh College), and Government College University, Lahore. He wrote his famous book *The preaching of Islam*. Arnold was born on 19 April 1864, and educated at the City of London School. From 1888 he worked as a teacher at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh. In 1898, he accepted a post as Professor of Philosophy at the Government College, Lahore and later became Dean of the Oriental Faculty at Punjab University. From 1904 to 1909 he was on the staff of the India Office as Assistant Librarian. In 1909 he was appointed Educational Adviser to Indian students in Britain. From 1917 to 1920 he acted as Adviser to the Secretary of State for India. He was Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the School of Oriental Studies, University of

- London, from 1921 to 1930. Arnold became the first English editor for the first edition of *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*.
32. Sir Thomas W Arnold (1896). *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* Westminster, London: A Constable & Co, 80.
  33. This quotation is taken from Abdul-Kareem Al-Sheha A-R (nd), *Islam is the Religion of Peace* who quoted from *Islam and Modern Age*, 67. See also, Ahmad Shalabi, *Comparative Religious Studies*, Vol. 3, 174.
  34. H. A. R. Gibb was a Scottish historian on Orientalism. He was born in 1895 in Alexandria, Egypt. His education was focused on classics, though it included French, German, and the physical sciences. In 1912, he matriculated at Edinburgh University, joining the new honours program in Semitic languages (Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic). After the war he studied Arabic at the School of Oriental and African Studies at London University, gaining his MA in 1922. His thesis, published later by the Royal Asiatic Society as a monograph, was on the Arab conquests of Central Asia. From 1921 to 1937 he taught Arabic at the then School of Oriental Studies, becoming a professor there in 1930. During this time he was an editor of the Encyclopaedia of Islam. In 1937 he succeeded D. S. Margoliouth as Laudian Professor of Arabic with a Fellowship at St John's College, Oxford. In 1955, he became the James Richard Jewett Professor of Arabic and University Professor at Harvard University.
  35. HAR Gibb, *Whither Islam; A Survey of Modern Movements in the Moslem World*, (London: V Gollancz, 1932), 379
  36. George Bernard Shaw (26 July 1856 – 2 November 1950), known at his insistence simply as Bernard Shaw, was an Irish playwright, critic, polemicist and political activist. His influence on Western theatre, culture and politics extended from the 1880s to his death and beyond. He wrote more than sixty plays, including major works such as *Man and Superman* (1902), *Pygmalion* (1912) and *Saint Joan* (1923). With a range incorporating both contemporary satire and historical allegory, Shaw became the leading dramatist of his generation, and in 1925 was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.
  37. GB Shaw (1936). *The Genuine Islam*, 1(8): <http://heavenslights.blogspot.com/2006/04/george-bernard-shaw-and-genuine-islam.html>. Accessed (03Dec18) Also: <http://www.cyberistan.org/islamic/quote2.html>
  38. *Ibid.*
  39. Qur'ān, *al-Furqān*: 63.

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