

Diversity and Pluralism in the Pre-Prophetic *Shariah*

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ABSTRACT:

More than 1.5 billion Muslims, no doubt, live within some fifty seven Muslim majority countries; nevertheless they are inhabited by other religious minorities. At the same time, Muslims constitute significant minorities throughout the non-Muslim world. India is inhabited by the second largest Muslim population after Indonesia. Other Asian and African countries also have sizable Muslim communities. In Europe (where some twenty million Muslims make Islam second largest religion) and America (where eight million Muslims make it the third largest religion), Muslims also constitute significant minorities. There is a challenge for these Muslim populations how to deal with the plural societies, in the societies in which they found themselves. This is, however, not a new experience to Islam and Muslims. Historically, from its very advent, Islam developed in and Muslims responded to a pluralistic world that was multi-religious and multi-ethnic. In this paper, a humble effort is made to highlight the Prophetic approach to diversity and pluralism before his Prophethood.

Key words: *Diversity, Pluralism, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), if al-Fu l, Ka 'bah, Muslim Minority, Plural Society.*

Introduction:

Prophet Muhammad's blessed life is the ideal model provided by Allah Almighty to be emulated by the humanity for peace and progress in this world and salvation in the hereafter. He was sent not only to Arabs or Muslims but to the whole world as a blessing and mercy. The holy *Qur'an* says: "We sent thee not save as a mercy for the peoples" ﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾¹

So the Prophet is not a national hero of Muslims but the Messenger for every human being—black or white, Arab or non-Arab, rich or poor, men or women. He is concerned with every person regardless of his inborn or acquired attributes. He struggled hard to emancipate man from the clutches of anarchy, chaos, oppression, tyranny to the stage of freedom, equality and peace. The prophet not only preached the values of compassion, forgiveness and tolerance but was himself the embodiment of these values. We find these qualities in his every dealing whether social, political or economic. The prophet was not biased to some groups in the matters of justice. He treated everyone equally.

Although prophethood was conferred on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) at the age of forty, his pre-Prophetic life is also a standard of morality and righteousness. In the divine scheme he was destined to be a prophet even before his birth. So he

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was under the direct protection of Allah and was saved from every error. His pre-Prophetic character is put forward by the holy *Qur'an* as a proof for his prophethood: "I dwelt among you a whole lifetime before it (came to me). Have ye then no sense?" ﴿فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيكُمْ عُمُرًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ﴾²

Therefore it becomes clear that in the Prophet's model there is guidance even before his prophethood worthy of following. In this chapter I have discussed the attitude and engagement of the Prophet with diversity and pluralism in the pre-prophetic phase. The plural nature of *Makkan* society, the Prophet's socio-economic activism and the views and interpretations of some contemporary scholars are mentioned.

Makkan Society at the Time of the Prophet's Birth

Makkah, the birth place of Allah's last messenger, though a small town separated by a sea of desert from rest of the world, had in it the potential of becoming the centre of one of the world's greatest cosmopolitan civilizations. The sole importance of *Makkah* lies in the presence of *Ka'bah*, the house of Allah, erected by Prophet *Ibrahim* and his son *Ismail* for the worship of only one God - Allah. It was because of *Ka'bah* that people settled in this otherwise arid area. In a course of time it became the centre of religious activities and it was this status of the place that overshadowed its other aspects.

People as pilgrims from the contiguous areas visited the Sanctuary of *Ka'bah* mostly in the sacred months. As a consequence *Makkah* became a centre of trade and commerce and its inhabitants emerged as businessmen. *Makkan* economy was thus dominated by trade. The place was not suitable for the agrarian pursuits because of its unfavorable topography and harsh climatic conditions. Another determining factor which helped *Makkah* to emerge as a hub of economic activities was its strategic position on the international trade route connecting Yemen to Syria. These trade relations exposed *Makkans* to the belief systems of outer world and according to *Ghada Osman*, "by the late sixth and early seventh centuries, trade had opened up the worlds of *Meccans* and *Medinans*, bringing them into contact with many people from nearby lands".³ This interaction has influenced the cultural and religious life of *Makkans*.

The common notion regarding the pre-Prophetic *Makkan* society is its monolithic character, inhabited by the people of same ethnicity, belief and culture. However this is not a reliable view. It was rather composed of several different groups with varied origin and religious outlook. The *Quraysh* tribe enjoyed majority and, hence, dominant position in the administration and polity. Nevertheless, other social groups and tribes had influential position in the society and they could affect the course of events. The theme is discussed by Prof. Muhammad *Yas^l n Ma^l har Sidd^l q^l* in his seminal work "*The Prophet Muhammad: a Role Model for Muslim Minorities*", in the first chapter entitled '*Pluralistic Society of Makkah*'.

Although "the sanctuary of Mecca was of extreme antiquity"⁴, it remained mainly uninhabited by any human population due to the factors already mentioned above. It was only after the settlement of *Ismail* that the place was

permanently occupied by his progeny. Some non-*Ism* ٱ lites also settled there in due course of time. The sanctuary was controlled for a long period by the tribe of *Jurhum* and then passed to *Kh* ٱ z ٱ 'ah. Until now the settlement around *Ka'bah* was in the form of mere encampment. It was *Quraysh* ay b. *kil* ٱ b, who gained strength by uniting *Quraysh* tribes and making alliance with other tribes mainly *Kin* ٱ nah and *Qu* ٱ ٱ ٱ 'ah, defeated *Kh* ٱ z ٱ 'ah and its allies, organized the city of *Makkah* in a systematic way.⁵ He organized the *Quraysh* tribes into *Quraysh al-Bi* ٱ ٱ (those who settled in the vicinity of the *Ka'bah*) including *Ban* ٱ *Makhz* ٱ m, *Ban* ٱ *Sahm*, *Ban* ٱ *'Adiyy*, *Ban* ٱ *Taym* and *Ban* ٱ *Juma* ٱ ; and *Quraysh al-* ٱ aw ٱ hir (those who settled at some distance from the *Ka'bah*) including *Ban* ٱ *Lu'ayy* and *Ban* ٱ *Fihri*. Professor *Yas* ٱ n *Ma* ٱ har *Sidd* ٱ q ٱ mentions the reason of this special arrangement as, "This stratification was based on social standing, rank of the family and the distinctions it enjoyed".⁶ This account gives the idea of social hierarchy among the *Quraysh* families. There were also some non-*Quraysh* tribes in *Makkah*. Therefore, the social cleavages in the *Makkan* society were too deep to consider it homogeneous.

Ostensibly the religious landscape of *Makkah* displayed unity. But on thorough consideration the monolith developed cracks, though the major fraction of polytheism caught the attention of traditional historians and the small ones lost the sight. However "a great deal of difficulty exists in concretely describing the indigenous religions of the Arab people during Muhammad's time. While it is known that the Arabs indulged in a mixture of polytheism and animism, their exact level of adherence to these systems is uncertain".⁷ In addition to idolatry there were a monotheistic group called ٱ *unafa'*, some Christians and the presence of Jews is controversial. A brief account of these religious communities is made here.

The main social group of *Quraysh* adhered to *Abrahamic* faith, which they had corrupted altogether by their own innovations and foreign influences into a new religion of polytheism with some original remnants in distorted form and "in terms of ideology, faith, rituals and practices they had nothing in common with the original faith. Their thought had degenerated into sheer polytheism".⁸ Polytheism in itself has more divisive potential because of the allegiance to different gods of the pantheon by different polytheistic groups and *Makkan* polytheism was not an exception. Every *Makkan* family and tribe worshiped its respective idols which generated rivalry between them.

Hubal, the national idol was installed at the roof of *Ka'bah* surrounded by a galaxy of three hundred and sixty idols, worshiped on each day of the year on their respective turn. In addition to idols there were many pictures on the walls of the *Ka'bah*. Hence polytheism was rooted deep in *Makkan* psyche. Non-*Quraysh* elements in *Makkan* society had their own national idols; however they had developed attachment to the *Quraysh* idols. Idols of the adjoining area too had their influence on them. Of them, the most important ones were *al-L* ٱ t, *al-Man* ٱ t and *al-Uzz* ٱ , which are mentioned in the *Qur* ٱ n with reference to the socio-religious life of *Makkah* and *Quraysh*. *As* ٱ f and *N* ٱ 'ilah were the idols of *Ban* ٱ -

Jurham and *al-Lḡ t* of *Thaqḍ f* of ḡ 'if. *al-'Uzzḡ* , the common idol of the *Quraysh* and *Kinḡ nah* was installed at *Nakhlah*. *Manḡ t* was worshiped by the Arab tribes - *al-aws* and *al-khazraj*. Such devotion to a large number of idols has corrupted their religious outlook.⁹

In this overarching polytheistic religious atmosphere a group of persons were not satisfied with their ancestral faith abandoned it and are known as *ḡ unafḡ* '.¹⁰ In their quest for truth some followed the *Abrahamic* faith although they had little knowledge about it, while others opted for Christianity, which they found nearer to truth. They abandoned idolatry, believed in monotheism, and resented dead meat, blood and offerings to idols. The most famous of the *ḡ unafḡ* ' who are mentioned in the books of *S*^ḍ *rah* and history are; *Zayd ibn-'Amr ibn-Nufayl*, *Waraqah ibn-Nawfal*, *'Uthmḡ n ibn-ḡ uwayrith* and *'Ubaidullah ibn-Ja F sh*. Among them the first one died as an adherent to *Abrahamic* faith while the other three later got converted to Christianity. But "the *ḡ anḍ fs*" according to Karen Armstrong, "had little impact on their contemporaries, because they were chiefly concerned with their own personal salvation. They had no desire to reform the social or moral life of Arabia, and their theology was essentially negative. Instead of creating something new, they simply withdraw from the mainstream".¹¹ There would have been some other Christians mainly Abyssinian slaves but we did not find their account probably due to their low social status and importance. These Christians were first generation and few in number, so there was no organized church. Nevertheless, according to Prof. *Siddḍ qḍ* , "their presence lent pluralism to local life and society"¹²

Was there any Jewish element in the *Makkan* society? The question invokes varied responses from different scholars. *Ahmad Barakat* while rejecting it altogether writes, "Torrey's thesis that there were Jews in Mecca at the time of Apostle is however, without foundation. *Al-Azraqi* makes no mention of any Jewish settlement in Mecca, but refers to their reverence for *Ka'bah*; they took their shoes off when they reached the boundaries of the sanctuary"¹³. In the support of this view he also quotes *Lammens*, "the fact that the *Quraysh* sent a delegation to Medina to consult the Jews regarding the Apostle's claim proves there were no Jews in Mecca whom they could consult".¹⁴ William Montgomery Watt holds the same view that "there were apparently practically no Jews in Mecca".¹⁵ On the other hand Prof. *Siddḍ qḍ* among others mention of Jewish presence in Mecca. He says, "Jews and Christians lived in the vicinity of the *Quraysh* and *Makkan* held them in awe. Jews and Christian thought had crept into their faith, rather influenced it"¹⁶ But according to the Islamic sources, there is no record of a Jewish community living in *Makkah* and Prof. *Siddḍ qḍ* also did not refer to any source. According to *Asghar Ali Engineer*,

When Islam emerged on the scene in early seventh century, Arabs were divided among different tribes but nevertheless spoke one language Arabic and more or less followed one religion (though had different traditions) i.e.

worshipping different idols placed inside *Ka'bah* and some idols which were outside Mecca. Thus we cannot call that society a pluralist society. Of course there were Jews in *Madīnah* and Christians in some parts of Arabian Peninsula. So in that way it was a multi-religious society to an extent as Christians and Jews were in small minorities.¹⁷

So it becomes evident that *Makkan* society about the birth of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not homogeneous. There were social stratifications and cleavages between different tribes and among different sections of the same family. In the religious life too, the society was not monolithic but diverse, the fact which became a contributing factor for the formation of multicultural empire in the later period. According to *Ibrahim Kalin*, "the fact that Islam has emerged within a diverse religious and ethnic environment in Arabia has helped it become a fairly cosmopolitan religion early on. This is clearly seen in the ethnic composition of the first Muslim community with a number of non-Arab personalities".¹⁸ Therefore by way of conclusion we may say in the words of Prof. *Siddiq* with certainty that, "by the time of the Prophet Muhammad's advent *Makkah* was truly pluralistic and Multi-faith society".¹⁹ This description gives an idea of the socio-religious milieu of *Makkan* society about the birth of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that will help us in understanding the Prophetic approach to diversity throughout his blessed life.

The Prophet's Economic Engagements:

Prophet *Muhammad* (PBUH), born to a noble family of *Quraysh Banī - Hashim* was entrusted to a wet-nurse of tribe *Banī - Sa'ad*, according to the Arab tradition. The practice aimed at to provide the children simple, free and healthy environment and eloquent language of the countryside. The Prophet after acquiring some physical strength begins to work with his step brother. The main task the Prophet took on was sheep-rearing. This could provide him at a very early stage, an opportunity to reflect on vast and open universe. According to Professor *Tariq Ramadan*, "He shared the nomads' life in the most barren and difficult natural environment, surrounded, as far as the eye could see, with horizons bringing to mind the fragility of the human being and spurring contemplation and solitude. Although he did not yet know it, Muhammad was going through the first trials ordained for him by the One, Who had chosen him as a messenger and was, for the time being, his Educator, his *Rabb*".²⁰ This gives the indication that the Prophet from the very childhood engaged himself in the resourceful activities that could contribute to the benefit of society.

Although having a serious temperament and not wasting any time in useless works the Prophet (PBUH) still remained intact with his immediate society taking interest in its affairs. The two occasions on which the Prophet wished to join some frivolous ceremony, fell asleep in the way and thereafter abandoned the very idea.²¹ This implies that a believer should engage fully with his society and take interest in its problems. But at the same time he should not get involved in the occasions or works having no utility or some moral lacunae. Following from this Muslims are required not to participate in the morally

objectionable functions in a plural society otherwise there is no restraint.

After returning home at the age of six, the Prophet continued sheep rearing. This was a divine arrangement and training for the man who has to guide humanity in the future. Tariq Ramadan writes, "The first years of Muhammad's life undoubtedly fashioned his outlook, preparing him to understand the signs in the universe. The spiritual teaching that can be drawn from them is essential, both for the Prophet's education and for our own education throughout history".²²

Along with sheep rearing he took to some spurious trading practices which could win him the title of *al-Am^l n* (trustworthy) and *al-ḥ^l ḡ diq* (truthful). "After being a shepherd, young Muhammad became a trader and built a reputation for honesty and efficiency, acknowledged all over the area. People started to call him *al-ḥ^l ḡ diq al-Am^l n*, "the truthful, the trustworthy," when he was only about twenty".²³ Influenced by the same famous attributes of the Prophet, a rich lady of *Makkah*, *Khad^l jah*, urged him to take her business responsibilities. He accepted the offer. In this way he came to be at the helm of affairs of a large business. In this connection he made business trips to many foreign countries including Syria. These economic engagements proved his wisdom, resourcefulness and trustworthiness. He dealt fairly and honestly with every human in a principled and unprejudiced way regardless of his creedal, tribal or any other ascriptions. According to Muhammad *ḥ^l am^l dullah*:

On attaining manhood, the Prophet apparently became a trader. A *Meccan*, *Qais ibn as-S^l 'b*, relates that before the advent he held commercial relations with the Prophet, whom he considered to be the best partner he ever had. Indeed he used to say: "Each time I entrusted him with something when he went on a journey, he would not go back home without setting my accounts to my full satisfaction. On the other hand, if it was he who entrusted me with something when I went on a journey, on my return, all the customers asked me about their own affairs, but the Prophet only inquired about my health and welfare."²⁴

Here is a model for the believers to maintain honesty in their dealings with Muslims as well as non-Muslims. At last, according to *Akhtarul Wasey*, "Islam believes in uninterrupted economic relations with non-Muslims as it recognizes the necessities of a plural society where people of different religions cannot survive without economic cooperation. The Prophet (PBUH) himself had economic relations with non-Muslims".²⁵

Truce of Alliances (ḥ^l ilf al-Fu ḥ^l l)

ḥ^l ilf al-Fu ḥ^l l, not only the most renowned alliance ever heard of in Arabia is also the most significant event in the pre-Prophetic *S^l rah* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) from my research point of view. The alliance was concluded in a society - *J^l hiliy^l h* Arabia—which had practically no positive law to secure individual freedom and civil liberty. The modern legal system was prominent by its absence. The system of fine or imprisonment did not exist. Then how was the society saved from anarchy? As no society can progress, nay even exist without law. According to *Barakat Ahmad*, "the Arab tribes maintained security by the solidarity of the tribal group. If a member of the group was killed, other members of the group

avenged him; if the member of a group was in danger, he was supported by the other members of the tribe irrespective of the right or wrong of the dispute".²⁶ So some semblance of peace was achieved by way of the fear of retaliation by the tribe offended. The people outside the tribal system particularly foreigners had no security of life and property in *Makkah*. They were easy prey of any oppression or plunder. There was no mechanism for the redress of injustice on their part. It was on one of the same occasions, when a foreigner was denied his right by a *Makkan* that the alliance of 1 was concluded to deal with the situation on permanent basis. I will now deal with the alliance in detail.

DATE AND CAUSES

Historians and *Sahih* writers are not unanimous regarding the date of conclusion of the alliance; however it is certain that it took place after the *Arab al-Fijr*, a famous war fought among Arab tribes before the advent of Islam that came to an end after a long period in *Shawal* 20 'L m al-F 1 (year of the elephant).²⁷ The alliance according to one report of *ibn-i-Abd al-Baghdadi* took place in *Dhul-Qa'dah* of the same year²⁸ and another report mentions the fifth year prior to the Prophet's proclamation of Prophethood²⁹, which comes to be 35 'L m al-F 1. However *Suhayl* and *ibn-i-kathir* mention the same month of *Dhul-Qa'dah* but 20 years prior to the Prophethood.³⁰

Regarding the causes of the alliance, there are also more than one views. Some chroniclers like *ibn-Qutaybah*, *ibn-Jawzi* and *Diyyaribikri* maintained that the *Quraysh* tribes without caring for the sacredness of *Ka'bah* oppressed one another. In order to put an end to this transgression the alliance was concluded³¹. 'Allama *Shibl* Nu'mani also gives a similar cause that a series of wars had destroyed hundreds of families, violence and murder had become usual affair. So the alliance was concluded as a reform measure³². According to Muhammad *Hamidullah*, *al-Zubair*, an uncle of the prophet seems to have been smitten with remorse after the huge bloodshed in the *Arab al-Fijr* in which he led his clan, took the initiative of reviving the centuries old chivalrous order or the alliance.³³ So the alliance, according to *Hamidullah*, was by no means altogether a new idea but the revival of centuries old *Makkan* chivalry. Also the cause given by him becomes plausible by comparing it to the first report of *ibn-i-Abd al-Baghdadi* regarding the date of the alliance which puts it in the month next to the month of the *Arab al-Fijr*'s end.

However most of the historians and *Sahih* writers mention of a particular cause which became a rallying point to the parties of the alliance. However the aforementioned general causes can be reconciled with the reported immediate cause. The generous section of *Makkan* society would have already become averse to the oppressive social conditions and the particular incident provided a reasonable chance to stand against the oppression.

A trader from *Zabid* tribe of Yemen visited *Makkah* and sold some merchandise to 'L s *ibn-Wa'il* of *Sahm* tribe there. He was not willing to pay the price. The trader approached some tribes but to his dismay they rather cursed him. After the failure of all his efforts to get help from someone, one day disappointed he

mounted on *Ab^l Qays* early in the morning. He chanted some lines of satire and repeated the story of his oppression. Some *Quraysh* leaders present in the courtyard of *Ka'bah* were moved by his melancholy songs. The issue was taken by some kindhearted and influential persons in a meeting of *Quraysh*. Lastly arrangements were made to return the trader his merchandise. With the efforts of some persons the historic alliance of *ilf al-Fu^l l* was concluded.³⁴

PARTICIPANTS

Conflicts and civil wars were frequent in Arabia and the escalation of any minor conflict to the inter-tribal war was unpredictable and spontaneous. So the tradition of formation of security alliances among different tribes was in vogue in Arabia. The tribes were becoming *al^l f* (supporter) of one another. Even *Quraysh* tribe got divided into two sections *Mu^l ayib^l n* and *A^l f l^l f*. *ilf al-Fu^l l* was initiated and concluded only by *Mu^l ayib^l n*; and *A^l f l^l f* did not participate because the person who was not willing to give the trader either the price or return the merchandise belonged to *Ban^l Sahm* which was a party to *A^l f l^l f* group.

The initiator of the alliance was the Prophet's uncle *Zubair ibn 'Abd al-Mu^l = allib*. On his invitation the tribes of *Mu^l ayib^l n* came to the house of the chief of *Ban^l Taim 'Abdullah ibn Jud^l n* and the Accord was concluded there and the parties to the alliance took oath.

The most important aspect of *ilf al-Fu^l l* is Prophet Muhammad's participation in the alliance. A companion of the Prophet *ak^l m ibn iz^l m*, who also was a friend of the Prophet before prophethood, is reported to have said, "The alliance which was concluded in the house of *'Abdullah ibn Jud^l n*, I have seen the Prophet in it. The alliance was written by *Zubair ibn 'Abd al-Mu^l = allib*". The Prophet himself was proud of this alliance and held it in such high esteem. He mentioned his presence in the alliance. *'Abd al-Ra^l f m^l n ibn A^l f* reported the Prophet to have said, "I have participated with my uncles in the alliance of *Mu^l ayib^l n* at my young age. If I am given red camel to break such an alliance, I will not be ready".³⁵ The age of the Prophet at that time was twenty according to many sources but thirty five according to *ibn-i-^l ab^l b al-Baghdadi*.

ARTICLES

The account of the articles in *ilf al-Fu^l l* is both short and detailed in different sources. According to *Ibn-Hish^l m* and *Ibn-Ath^l r*, "They made an Accord by taking oath that no one will be oppressed in the city of *Makkah*, whether resident or foreigner. They will rise against the oppressor in favor of the oppressed until the latter gets his due right".³⁶

Ibn-i-^l ab^l b al-Baghdadi adds, "Whether the oppressed is of higher or lower status; whether among us or outsider", we will support him in every situation.³⁷

In one report of *Ab^l al-Faraj al-I^l fahan^l*, "whether he to our country or other; whether he is free or slave", we will extend our support to him. Also, "we also made the alliance to enjoin good and forbid evil".³⁸

According to *ibn-Kathir*, "they made the alliance by swearing Allah that they will help the oppressed against the oppressor as a single body, until the oppressed is given back his right. This pact of ours will be valid for all times to come".³⁹

Ibn-i-Sa'ad, *Badhdadi*, *Suhayl* and *ibn-Kathir* have mentioned another article as, "and we concluded the alliance on mutual financial help".⁴⁰

Muhammad *Hamidullah* gives a comprehensive account which includes both social and economic implications of the alliance. He writes crowd of young and old Meccans attended the ceremony in the house of the rich and venerated *'Abdullah ibn Judhan* and swore the following oath: "By God, we shall all be as one hand along with the oppressed against the oppressors until the later give back the former their rights, and this, as long as the sea will be able to moisten a hair and also as long as the mounts of *Quraysh* and *Thabir* will stand in their places, the economic situation (of the oppressed) being treated with equality."⁴¹

SOME ACTIONS

The immediate action taken by the participants to the alliance was their pressure on *'Abdullah ibn-Wa'il* and made him to return the merchandise to the Yemenite trader. Afterwards when someone was oppressed he would call upon the *Fuqayh*s (the participants of *ilf al-Fuqayh*) and they would come forward for his help. Historians have cited many occasions when the alliance was invoked for action and it performed its function effectively. Some of the examples are given below;

Lamis bin-Sa'ad al-Baqri of *Thamim* tribe came from Azad with some merchandise to *Makkah*. *Ubay bin-Khalf al-Jumahi* bought goods from him and then withheld payment. The merchant approached some persons but no one came forward for his help. Somebody advised him to approach the *Fuqayh*s. He approached them and they sent him back to *Jumahi* to tell him that he was sent by the *Fuqayh*s. On hearing their reference he paid the merchant immediately.⁴²

A person from tribe *khath'am* came to *Makkah* to perform *hajj* and *'Umrah* with his beautiful daughter. One of the most powerful *Makkans*, *Nubaih ibn al-Qajjaj*, took his daughter by force. The father appealed *Ban Sahm* and other tribes of *Quraysh* but all in vain. Finally someone advised him to appeal the *Fuqayh*s. *Nubaih's* house was immediately besieged. Finding no way to defend himself, he began to beg for a favor to spend only one night with her. But the *Fuqayh*s did not agree and returned the daughter to her father then and there.⁴³

We find the effectiveness of the alliance even during Umayyad period. Once a dispute took place between *Mu'awiyah's* nephew *Walid bin 'Utbah*, governor of *Madinah*, and *Usayn bin-'Al* over some property. At once *Usayn* warned him of calling unto *ilf al-Fuqayh* if he was not given his right. *'Abdullah ibn-Zubair Hisham*, *Mas'ud b. Mahzama Zuhri* and *'Abd al-Rahman b. Uthman Taimi* showed their eagerness to support *Usayn*. Consequently *Walid* returned

his property.⁴⁴

This is the last historical account, mentioning of *if al-Fu* in the sources. What was the reason for the end of this glorious institution? Muhammad *Hamidullah* writes, "The only disadvantage was that no new member was allowed in, and after a few decades the death of its last member put an end to it".⁴⁵ However Dr. *Nadavi* refutes the view by saying that persons mentioned in the case of *usayn* vs. *Walid* dispute were not present at the time of its conclusion, they would have joined at a later time.⁴⁶

Contemporary Relevance for Pluralistic Societies

if al-Fu has caught the attention of many contemporary scholars. They have interpreted it variously in an innovative way. They have also underscored its implications and utility for a pluralistic society.

Rachid Ghannouchi in his article 'Participation of Islamists in a Non-Islamic government' tries to search for Islamic position regarding the participation of Muslims in a non-Islamic government. He has enunciated the concept of power-sharing in a plural society with plausible arguments from the *Qur'an* and Islamic history. He maintains that "on the basis of the general fundamentals of Islam and its purposes of accomplishing the needs and serving the interests of the public, it is incumbent upon the community of the faithful to avoid passivism and isolationism".⁴⁷

Ghannouchi refers to *if al-Fu* to underscore the legality of making joint ventures even political with non-Muslims in a plural society. The concept of power-sharing is crucial for some cherished goals as cited by him;

Power-sharing in Muslim or non-Muslim environment becomes a necessity in order to lay the foundations of the social order. This power-sharing may not necessarily be based on Islamic *Shari'ah* law. However it must be based on an important Foundation of an Islamic Government, namely *Shari'ah*, or the authority of the *Ummah* (community), so as to prevent the evils of dictatorship, foreign domination and local anarchy. Such a process power-sharing may also aim to achieve a national or a humanistic interest such as independence, development, social solidarity, civil liberties, human rights, political pluralism, independence of the judiciary, freedom of press, or liberty for mosques and Islamic activities.⁴⁸

Ghannouchi advocates alliance and cooperation of the oppressed, belonging to any class, religion or group against the oppressor, be it in the guise of dictatorship, colonialism or imperialism. He also holds outer security and internal freedom and stability of a plural society as the main objectives of this cooperation.

Gannouchi while advocating the same cooperation on humanitarian grounds writes, "Several events can be quoted from the *Qur'an*, the *Sunnah* and Islamic history to prove that Muslims, as individuals or as communities, are permitted to participate in establishing or administering non-Islamic governments in order to achieve good and avoid evil"⁴⁹ From the pre-prophetic

Shah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Ghannouchi cites the alliance of *Uj al-Fudayl*. He writes;

It was an agreement among several pre-Islamic Arab tribes to support the wronged, maintain close relations with relatives and take good care of them. The Prophet did witness the signing of the alliance prior to his prophethood, and said afterwards that if he were to be invited to a similar alliance in Islam he would have accepted without reservation. He further stressed that any good and noble contract made in *Jahiliyah* (the pre-Islamic era) is automatically endorsed by Islam.⁵⁰

After giving this brief description of *Uj al-Fudayl*, Ghannouchi enumerates its implications in an amazing manner, subsuming the real essence of pluralism as;

It is thus concluded that the community of believers may participate in an alliance aimed at preventing injustice and oppression, at serving the interests of mankind, at protecting human rights, at recognizing the authority of the people and at rotating power-holding through a system of elections. The faithful can pursue all these noble objectives even with those who do not share the same faith or ideology.⁵¹

Ghannouchi defends the position of the Muslim individuals and groups who have entered into alliances within a non-Islamic framework in contemporary times in order to prevent evil and serve humanity. He rebuts the scholars who maintain such endeavors as un-Islamic. Therefore he signifies the Prophetic model for the Muslim living in a plural society.

Akhtarul Wasey mentions *Uj al-Fudayl* as a landmark event of considerable significance. According to him;

There are numerous instances of social justice in the life of and lofty teachings of the Prophet. The covenant entered into at Mecca is a landmark in respect of providing help to the oppressed and making secure the rights of the weak. This socially significant step taken together with people of other faiths was so dear to the Prophet when he said, "I will come if I am invited for this cause after I cease to be Prophet."⁵²

The social justice at which the alliance was aimed is considered crucial for the stable and just political system. The same objective was given priority in the post second world war welfare states. He a

Dr. Ra'ad al-Islam Nadavi has discussed the alliance of *Uj al-Fudayl* thoroughly in his research paper '*Uj al-Fudayl*: 'Aḥadith Ma'naviyat' published in a reputed Urdu quarterly "*Tehqiqat-i-Islami*" in April—June issue of 2002. He has answered some important questions regarding the relevance of the alliance in present times. He has dealt with the societies with Islamic and non-Islamic governments separately.

Regarding the former case, Dr. Nadavi writes, "In the societies where Islam is reigning and the system of justice is established, the alliances like *Uj al-Fudayl* are not necessary. Because Islam provides the security and guarantees rights; and legislates to curb oppression and assist the oppressed".⁵³ On the other

hand "the societies where Islamic *Shar'ah* is not in operation these alliances may prove effective in obtaining justice in case of oppression and injustice".⁵⁴

In the countries where judicial system is fully developed and justice can be obtained through legal aid, what is the relevance of *Uff al-Fu'ul*? Dr. *Nadavi* provides a brilliant answer to the question. He says, "The objection is not right in toto. It is true that the legal aid can be obtained easily but the judicial expenses are very high. Usually the oppressed are poor and weak people which cannot afford these charges".⁵⁵ In the concluding lines Dr. *Nadavi* writes,

In the Prophet's endorsement of *Uff al-Fu'ul* it can be deduced that in a multi-faith (plural) society cooperation can be made with the people of other faiths on common programs. Also alliances can be made with them in the spread of the values cherished by Islam. In this regard the basic principle of Islam 'cooperate with others in the works of goodness and piety and do not cooperate in evil and oppression' guides us.⁵⁶

Seif I Teig al-Din, with regard to *Uff al-Fu'ul*, says "there is a wealth of evidence in relation to Islam's deep humanist consideration".⁵⁷ He also commensurate it with human rights movement in which the Prophet participated before his prophethood. "Before being a Prophet, Muhammad took an active part in that alliance, which was purely a matter of defending human rights. Yet, to formally establish a tradition of a human rights' movement in Islam, Muhammad recalled that incident with great appreciation after being prophet, asserting that he wouldn't value his participation in *Fu'ul* Alliance with any worldly rewards!"⁵⁸

Teig al-Din underscores the appreciation of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the value of human rights regardless the faith of the party concerned. He says:

Obviously the participation had nothing to do with religion of the parties involved. The leader of the Alliance (*'Abdullah ibn Jud'n*) was a pagan (i.e., mushrik) and the restored rights belonged to other pagan who mostly used to worship idols around the *Ka'bah*. Nonetheless Muhammad expressly confirmed his willingness to re-join the alliance whenever repeated. It was reported, however, on the Prophet's authority that *ibn Jud'n* might not be rewarded on the Day of Judgment for his worldly good deeds, since he never asked for God's forgiveness. That was still a different matter, completely irrelevant to the Prophet's appreciation to the value of human rights on this Earth.⁵⁹

Therefore it follows clearly from the above quoted passage that the religious differences should be no obstruction to the Muslims living in a multi-religious society to join hands with the adherents of other faiths to safeguard the rights of the humanity at large. Also if we move a step forward, "a human rights movement that Muslims should join need not be organized by Muslim initiative".⁶⁰

Teig al-Din mentions an important implication of *Uff al-Fu'ul* which is most relevant in the contemporary world scenario. According to him, "the *Fu'ul* incident bears a powerful guidance in relation to the Islamic understanding of terrorism, since the reported incident was a terrorist strike

against a group of innocent civilians. It clearly embodies the fact that any terrorist aggression against a civil human society is aggression against an established Islamic value, no matter how the society is viewed from original Islamic sources".⁶¹

Professor *Tariq Ramadan* in his important work '*In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad*' gives an adequate consideration to alliance of *al-Fuḍal* and brings out the Prophetic model for pluralistic societies.

Before the advent of Islam, Arab society was based on tribalism and the tribe was the focal point of the loyalty of its members. It was improbable for the Arabs to think beyond tribal considerations for some higher goals or values. But the alliance was altogether novel in its objectives from the other alliances made by Arabs. Therefore "not only did the Prophet stress the excellence of the terms of the pact as opposed to the perverted tribal alliances prevailing at the time, but he added that even as the bearer of the message of Islam—even as a Muslim—he still accepted its substance and would not hesitate to participate again".⁶²

According to *Tariq Ramadan*, three major teachings can be derived from the alliance of *al-Fuḍal*. By way of the first teaching, he observes;

Muhammad acknowledges a pact that was established before the beginning of Revelation and which pledges to defend justice imperatively and to oppose the oppression of those who were destitute and powerless. This implies acknowledging that the act of laying out those principles is prior to and transcends belonging to Islam, because in fact Islam and its message came to confirm the substance of a treaty that human conscience had already independently formulated. Here, the Prophet clearly acknowledges the validity of a principle of justice and defence of the oppressed stipulated in a pact of the pre-Islamic era.⁶³

Therefore the first implication which is underscored by *Tariq Ramadan* is the validity of all acts, pacts and principles in the Islam that are aimed at defending justice and opposition of oppression on the destitute and weak. This is endorsed by the Prophet's example of acknowledging a pact of the pre-Islamic era.

The second teaching is also essential particularly in an environment in which Muslims live side by side with the people of other religious denominations. *Tariq Ramadan* writes;

At a time when the message was still being elaborated in the course of Revelation and of the Prophet's experiences, he acknowledged the validity of a pact established by non-Muslims seeking justice and the common good of their society. The Prophet's statement is in itself a blatant denial of the trend of thought expressed here and there throughout the history of Islamic thought—and to this day—according to which a pledge can be ethically valid for Muslims only if it is of strictly Islamic nature or/ and if it is established between Muslims. Again, the key point is that the Prophet clearly acknowledges the validity of adhering to principles of justice and defending the oppressed, regardless of whether those principles come from inside Islam or outside it.⁶⁴

Here *Tariq Ramadan* refutes the common notion that Muslims are

accountable only to the pacts and pledges made between Muslims. This teaching has a sheer importance for a pluralistic society. The Muslims are duty bound to uphold the contracts and pacts whether social, economic, political or otherwise made with non-Muslims. Muslims have to be fair in their dealings with all regardless of their affiliations.

Explaining the third teaching of the alliance of *Uhuylah*, Tariq Ramadan reaches the apex of reflection. The most crucial implications are underscored in clear words that need no further explanation or elaboration that is why I am quoting his opinion exactly. He writes;

The message of Islam is by no means a closed value system at variance or conflicting with other value systems. From the very start, the Prophet did not conceive the content of his message as the expression of pure otherness versus what the Arabs or the other societies of his time were producing. Islam does not establish a closed universe of reference but rather relies on a set of universal principles that can coincide with the fundamentals and values of other beliefs and religious traditions (even those produced by a polytheistic society such as that of Mecca at the time). Islam is a message of justice that entails resisting oppression and protecting the dignity of the oppressed and the poor, and Muslims must recognize the moral value of a law or contract stipulating this requirement, whoever its authors and whatever the society, Muslim or not. Far from building an allegiance to Islam in which recognition and loyalty are exclusive to the community of faith, the Prophet strove to develop the believer's conscience through adherence to principles transcending closed allegiances in the name of a primary loyalty to universal principles themselves. The last message brings nothing new to the affirmation of the principles of human dignity, justice, and equality: It merely recalls and confirms them. As regards moral values, the same intuition is present when the Prophet speaks of the qualities of individuals before and in Islam: "The best among you [as to their human and moral qualities] during the era before Islam [*al-Jahiliyyah*] are the best in Islam, provided they understand it [Islam]". The moral value of a human being reaches far beyond belonging to a particular universe of reference; within Islam, it requires added knowledge and understanding in order to grasp properly what Islam confirms (the principle of justice) and what it demands should be reformed (all forms of idol worship).⁶⁵

Antony T. Sullivan in his article '*Islam, America, and the Political Economy of Liberty*' highlights the ideal constituted in the alliance of *Uhuylah* upon which the contemporary liberal Muslims might build the institutions that support freedom. He writes, "In 590 the young Muhammad, a full 20 years before the *Qur'ānic* message began to be revealed to him, witnessed ratification of the alliance called the *Uhuylah*. This pact was concluded by assorted Arab tribes in the vicinity of Mecca. This alliance was the first public treaty anywhere guaranteeing human rights. The *Uhuylah* is a remarkable document".⁶⁶ Sullivan names the alliance as the first public treaty for human rights. Therefore the implication of the treaty becomes manifold in the age of grave human rights violation.

The project 'Contextualising Islam in Britain: Exploratory Perspectives' carried out by HRH Prince al-waleed Bin $\text{ٱ} \text{ٱ} \text{ٱ}$ al Centre of Islamic Studies, Cambridge under the leadership of Professor Yasir Suleiman projects the implication and importance of $\text{ٱ} \text{ٱ} \text{ٱ} \text{ٱ} \text{ٱ}$ for the Muslim minorities in general and particularly in the British context. According to it, "The challenge for British Muslims [for that for every Muslim minority] is to re-contextualise those teachings [Islam should be seen as God's articulation of how He wants humans to live with their intrinsic nature ($\text{fi} \text{=} \text{rah}$)]: to remove the context of the primary geography and articulate Islamic principles in a new environment".⁶⁷ And as a part of this task according to it,

is to articulate support for human rights, freedom and democracy, in the same way as Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) used to speak of an association of virtue ($\text{ٱ} \text{ٱ} \text{ٱ} \text{ٱ} \text{ٱ}$), for although this civic association dated from before his Prophethood and was not based on revelation, he later affirmed that he would still have joined any common venture with neighbours to advance any common good. It should not be difficult for Muslims to adopt and express support for these things.⁶⁸

The other implication demands active social participation from the Muslims.

The Islamic ethical tradition does not allow Muslims simply to be recipients of the welfare state; rather it mandates an ethos of self-reliance and proactive participation in civil society. This means, for example, setting up and participating in voluntary initiatives that help to deliver the UK's social needs. This is one way of embodying the idea of the virtuous society (*hif al-fudul*). Civic involvement is an Islamic imperative: the care of the young, the old, the vulnerable, the sick, the dispossessed and the oppressed is integral to the Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him).⁶⁹

Re-Construction of Ka'bah

When Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was twenty-five, a sudden flood shook the foundations and cracked the walls of Ka'bah. Also the walls of Ka'bah were low and without ceiling therefore the treasures it housed were exposed to robbery. So the *Quraysh* decided to rebuild the Ka'bah. After protracted hesitation of demolishing the sacred House, the old structure was demolished and the new construction began on the same base founded by Prophet $\text{ٱ} \text{ٱ} \text{ٱ}$ ٱ . As the walls rose from the ground and the time came to place the sacred black stone ($\text{ٱ} \text{ٱ} \text{ٱ}$ *ajar al-Aswad*) in its place in the east wall, they differed as to who would have the honour of laying it in place.

Competition was so keen that it almost led to a new civil war. The descendents of *'Abd al-Dar* and of *'Adiyy* allied themselves together and swore that none would rob them of this honour. They were so serious in their resolution that members of the clan of *Banu 'Abd al-Dar* brought a bowl full of blood in which they dipped their hands in confirmation of their solemn oath. For this act they were later called "the blood mongers". When Abu *'Umayyah*, son of *Mugh ٱ rah al-Makhz ٱ m ٱ* saw what happened, he took advantage of his power

and prestige and said to the *Makkans*, "While we are all standing here, let the first one to pass through the gate of *al-ḥuffah* be our arbitrator in this dispute". The first one to pass through the gate was Muhammad.

When they be held him they said, "There goes *al-Amr¹ n*. We shall agree with his verdict". Realizing, as he listened to them, that the contenders had worked themselves up into a passion, Muhammad thought for a moment and said, "Bring me a robe". He took the robe they brought, spread it on the ground, and placed the black stone on it and then said, "Let the elders of each clan hold onto one edge of the robe". They all complied and together carried the stone to the site of construction. There, Muhammad picked up the stone and laid it in its place by himself. Bloodshed was thus averted and the dispute was solved to everybody's satisfaction.

From the event, Muhammad *Husayn Haykal* in his book, *The Life of Muhammad*, deduces the active participation of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the affairs of his society. "Muhammad did not withdraw from the people of *Makkah* or from participating in the public life of the city. He took every initiative to eschew conflict and maintain peace in *Makkah*."

Tariq Ramadan takes the event which "shows that to his qualities of heart and his moral distinction must be added a sharp intelligence, which he used in the service of respect and peace between people and between clans".⁷⁰ He further observes:

This intuitive intelligence had immediately managed to reconcile the pride of each clan with their need for union... In the quest for peace, he constantly strove to achieve again what he had done in this difficult situation between the *Quraysh* clans: teach the heart not to give way to proud emotions and arrogant thinking; bring the mind to heart-soothing solutions that make it possible to control oneself gently and wisely. In the years before Revelation, the Messenger's Educator had granted him this particular quality, an alliance between a deep heart and a penetrating spirit, of knowing how to be reasonable in all circumstances, with oneself and among other people.⁷¹

The Prophet had a brilliant reconciliatory skill which he used in the service of mitigating conflicts between the rival claimants and groups with varied interests.

Mohammed Abu-Nimer discusses Prophet Muhammad's creative skills of conflict resolution in a non-violent manner during his early age before the prophethood in his paper '*A Framework for Nonviolence and Peace-building in Islam*'. He observes:

The Prophet's intervention in resolving the problem of the Black Stone in Mecca is... a classic example of peace-building. It illustrates the creativity of a peaceful problem-solving approach conducted by a third party intervener (in this case, the Prophet himself). Mecca clans had a dispute over the *Ka'bah's* building and the lifting of the Black Stone to its higher location. The clans asked for the Prophet's advice and intervention, due to his reputation as a trustworthy and faithful person. The Prophet proposed a simple yet creative method to resolve the dispute. He placed the stone on a cloak and asked each clan to hold one side of the cloak and jointly lift the stone to the required height, then he placed the Black Stone in its new location. The resolution of this problem implies the

denunciation of violence and competition, and appreciates values of joint problem solving, and creativity. In fact, there are many accounts of interventions by the Prophet in which he utilized such skills and principles in settling disputes.⁷²

Afzal Iqbal discusses the incident of Prophet's arbitration in the dispute among the Arab tribes at the time of rebuilding of *Ka'bah* in the very beginning of his pioneering book '*The Prophet's Diplomacy*' as a proof of the Prophet's highest diplomatic skill of conflict resolution and peace-building. He observes, "The first glimpse that we get of the diplomat in Muhammad comes long before he was invested with the role of the prophethood. The Scene is Mecca. Muhammad is in his twenties. A dispute arises out of the reconstruction of the *Ka'bah*".⁷³ Then he mentions the whole event in an elegant way and by way of conclusion says, "Thus the highest qualities of tact and judgement save a situation which seemed impossible to settle otherwise. This was the first time in Muhammad's life these qualities found public expression and won instant recognition. Muhammad at this time was not a prophet and was less than twenty years of age".⁷⁴

So the Prophet saved *Makkans* from an imminent war that would have resulted in a huge loss of life and property.

Conclusion

From the above detailed analysis of different events in the pre-prophetic life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Prophet's attitude, it becomes clear that Muslims should engage actively with other people in the pursuit of justice, peace, progress and other cherished values.

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