

Inter Semitic Religions Dialogue (Significance and Requirement)

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In this paper, the term dialogue has been defined and shown the difference between the terms: dialogue and debate. The importance of dialogue among the Semitic Religions has been high lighted. Further, the significance and utility of such type of dialogue in the present age have been discussed. A sketch of human service in the light of the teachings of three Semitic Religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam has been presented. The difference between the new term of "Terrorism" and "Jihad" has also been clarified.

Definition of Dialogue:

The literal meanings of dialogue follow as under:

1. Conversation between two or more people.
2. An exchange of opinions, discussion.
3. The lines spoken by characters in drama or fictior.
4. A pasage of conversation in a literary or dramatic work.
5. A literary composition in the form of a dialogue.
6. A political discussion between representatives of two or more nations and groups.

It means that dialogue is meant for an authentic conversation on some specific issue among different people or groups. In other sords, the dialogue is a process to solve logically with reasoning some contradiction or disagreement prevailing among some persons, groups or nations by understanding respective point of views.

The difference between Disputation (Munazra) and Dialogue:

It is very essintial to understand the difference between disputation and dialogue. Disputation means to prove one's own faith, ideas and beliefs true by rejeeting the faith., ideas and beliefs of others by condemning and criticizing. Whereas the dialogue is meant to present one's own point of view about one's ideas., faith and believes logically without condemning or criticizing others or their beliefs. Thus, the dialogue is a process to solve logically with reasoning some contradiction or disagreement prevailing among some persons, groups or nations by understanding respective point of views.

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Importance of Dialogue among the Semitic Religions:

The Semitic Religions are also called Revealed Religions and includes judaism, Christianity and Islam. Inter Religions Dialogue means the discussion among the followers of different religions to understand their respective opinions about some issues of public importance to seek the solution religiously or to develop at least the common consensus about that issue among the believers of different religions. In the present age of ours, it has become essential, as the world is turning into a global village, the distances are getting shorter and interactions among diverse nations and believers of different religions is getting frequent.

As the basic beliefs about Allah Almighty, Prophet hood and the life hereafter are common among the believers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, so there is a natural tendency and common foundation among these religions which can provide a common basis for dialogue to reach at some consensus on certain controversial issues leading to harmony, peace and stability in the world.

Another important reason of such type of dialogue is that the present day governments of America and other European countries claim themselves secular, but the rulers believe in Christianity and the jews, who have great influence upon them, use them against the Muslims. It is beyond any doubt that the rulers of America and other European states, which are united against the Muslims, have initiated a baseless propaganda against Islam and the Muslims. The majority of peace loving neutral people, who are unaware about the teachings of Islam, are falling an easy prey to this poisonous propaganda of the west against Islam. Therefore such type of dialogue among the believers of Semitic Religions will help in high lighting the facts to reach at the common basses for harmony and peace in the world, further it will time light the true teachings of Islam leading to the spread of Islam in the world.

The Historical Continuity of Dialogue in the Semitic Religions:

The process of dialogue with the jews and Christians began in the early period of Islam as it is in the Holy Qura'an:

قُلْ يَا حُلَّيْنِ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ ۖ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَحِثُّ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضُنَا بِرَبَابِ مَنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَتَوَلَّوْا الشِّرْكَاءَ بَنَاتِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (آل عمران، ٦٣)

"O' Beloved Prophet! declre, O' people of the book! come to the Kalima (sacred words) which is common between you and us that we worship none but Allah: that we do not associate any partner with him, nor some of us take anybody else as our Rabb (sustainer) and patron other than Allah. Even then if they do not accept you tell them. Bear witness that we are Muslims (obedients)" (2)

This verse stresses upon the need to start the dialogue with the jews and Christians on those things which are common and equally accepted among the followers of judaism, Christianity and Islam. Some scholars believe that such type of dialogue was meant only in the period of prophet hood and now it is not allowed and they quote the following verse of the Holy Qura'an as a proof for their claim:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَّخِذْهُم مُّشْرِكًا فَقَدْ فَعَلَ إِنَّهُ اسْمٌ لِلَّهِ عَنِ النَّاسِ
الظَّالِمِينَ - (المائدة: ٥٠: ٥١)

"O' believers do not make the jews and the Christians friends. They are only friends of each others. And whose of you makes them friends then he is also one of them. Surely, Allah does not guide the cruel people.(3)

In this verse. 'Aulia' is plural of 'Wali' which means friend which at one side means helper and on the other side it means the guardian and this verse conveys the same command not to trust them to the level to make them guardian of your affairs and trust worthy friends.

Imam Fakhar ud Din Razi explains this verse as:

”ومعنى لا تتخذوا أولياء أي لا تعتمدوا على الاستنصار بهم، ولا تتودوا بهم“

The meanings لا تتخذوا أولياء are, you should not depend upon their help blindly and make them bosom friends.(4)

As far as to initiate a dialogue with them about the political, social and other worldly matters is concerned, it is not forbidden. There are certain examples of agreement as the result of such type of dialogues. One example of such type of agreement is that agreement which was made with the jews and other tribes, the agreement is called by the name of 'Misaaq e Madina' in history. Ibn e Hasham writes: "After his arrival in Madina, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) signed a packet, and the parties were the Muslims, Immigrants, Locals and Jews of Madina.(5)

Some scholars claim that there had not been held any dialogue for the agreement, rather it was a constitution which the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) had prepared and implemented on the jews; but it is not true, it was an agreement and the agreement is never one sided. It is always done with the result of dialogue and willingness of the participants. If it is accepted that it had been enforced one sided, it would not have been essential for the jews to obey it and likewise on the violation of it, they could not have been declared of violation of the agreement leading to punishment for the jews.

The non-believers of Makka wrote a letter to the jews of Madina compelling them to begin a war against the Muslims to overthrow them from Madina, otherwise they would annihilate them. Pir Karam Shah writes; "When they received the letter of Makkans, they forsook the agreement with the Muslims and started conspiracies"(6) It proves that the Missaq e Madina was an agreement which came into being as the result of dialogue with the jews.

There is another important event of dialogue in the history; a delegation of the Christian of Nijraan came to Madina in the ninth year of Hijra and Pir Karam Shah writes: "These people came in Madina to debate with the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) about the Christ (A.S)--- They offered the compliments which the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) answered with compliments and the conversation began---(7). The delegation had a lengthy discussion which had also been hinted in the Holy Qura'an. When the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) asked them for 'Mubahalal', they agreed to pay the 'Jazia' to the Muslims.

Similarly Hazrat Ummar (R.A) conducted a dialogue with the residents of Ailia at Jabia as the result of that: they agreed to hand over the 'Bait ul Moqaddas' to the Muslims.(8) There are many examples of such dialogues leading to the better results in the human history.

The Dialogue in the Present Age:

it is true that the dialogue and war have been continuing among the jews, Christians and Muslims forever, but in the present age when the imperialistic powers of America and Europe have started war against the Muslims, sometimes this war is termed as

the clash of civilizations and elsewhere it is declared war against terrorism. In Iraq and Afghanistan, a horrible war is in progress killing the millions of the Muslims and leading to many more disabled. Some horrified political and even liberal religious leaders are on their way to give a message and lesson of liberalism to the Muslim Ummah. They have started a chain of so called inter religious dialogues and conferences through out the world convey the message of love and bledience to the Christians and the jews. Such type of activities are not only collectively harming the interest of the Muslim Ummah, but also proving dangerous for the universal message of Islam.

Under these circumstances the importance of inter-religious dialogue cannot be denied but such dialogue must be conducted through those scholars who have thorough knowledge of religions, history and current affairs. These Muslim Scholars must be capable to aptly discuss and aggue logically the controversial issue with the religious leaders of the jews and the Christians in the light of Islamic teachings. The followings points can provide the basis for such type of dialogue:

- * Irrespective of colour, creed and religion, the message of the Semitic Religions should be given protection.
- * What is the concept of war, its ovjectives, principles and instruction? off all such type matters can be discussed.

An example there follows as under:

Islam and Humanity:

Islam has addressed the whole humanity irrespective of cast, colour and creed. It is in the Holy Qura'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ. (البقره ۲: ۲۱)

O; mankind! worship your Rubb (Sustainer) who created you and those before you, so that you that you may become pious.(9)

At another place the Holy Qura'an stated as:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَمُ. (الحجرات، ۱۳: ۱۳)

O' mankind! We (Allah) created you from one male and one female and distributed you in communities and tribes that you may recognize each other: surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is he who is more pious.(10)

Islam presents the concept of Allah who is God of the whole Humanity as it is in the Holy Qura'an:

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ - (الناس، ١: ١١٣)

Please declare, I (Muhammad) seek refuge with the Rubb (Sustainer) of the mankind.(11)

The Holy Qura'an says about the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) as

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَاءَ الْاَعْرَافَ، ٤: ١٥٨

Please declare, "O' mankind I am Rasool (messenger) to all of you from Allah.(12)

The Holy Prophet high lights the place of humanity as:

والناس كلهم بنو ادم، وادم خلق من تراب - (الحديث)

All the human beings are Adam's children and Adam (A.S) was created from the dust.(13)

At another place it is conveyed as:

الخلق عيال الله فاحب الخلق الى الله من احسن الى عياله - (الحديث)

The whole humanity is family of Allah and one who treats His family well is very dear to Allah.(14)

Judaism and Humanity:

The place of human beings is stated in the Old Testament as in the chapter of Genesis:

So God created man in His own image of God. He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.(15)

According to the teachings of the Bible. God is only God of Israel and He had addressed only Israel, it is in the chapter of Leviticus:

Concrate yourselves and be holy because I am the Lord your God. Keep my decree and follow them. I am the Lord who makes you holy.(16)

Hazrat Musa (A.S) was the Prophet of Israel and he addressed only Israel, as it is in the Chapter of Exodus:

Then moses went up to God and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel.(17)

Hazrat Musa (A.S) every addressed only Israel and all his commands are meant only for Israel.

Christianity and Humanity:

The New Testament quotes the saying of the Christ how to treat the fellow human beings as:

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke up on you and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls.(18)

Prophet Isaiah (A.S) says about the Christ (A.S) as:

Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight: I will put my spirit on him. And he will proclaim justice to the nations.(19)

But the Prophet hood of the Christ is also limited to only the Israel as the Christ himself says:

He answered. "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel".(20)

Result:

If the religious books of these three Semitic Religions are studied, it gets clear. The Judaism describes the creation of two human beings and spread of humanity from them, but the right to get guidance, success and salvation is meant only for the Israel. God is also meant for the Israel and likewise He addresses only to the Israel. Hazrat Musa (A.S) is the Prophet of only the Israel and has nothing to do with the rest of humanity.

Christianity preaches that only those will get peace, success and salvation who will attach themselves and follow the Christ (A.S) and the Christ (A.S) will give the news of justice to the other nations and human beings, but what would be that news of justice, there is no further mentioning. As far as the Christ's Prophet hood is concerned that is limited only to the lost sheep of Israel.

Whereas according to the teachings of Islam. Allah is meant for the whole humanity and similarly His Prophet. Hazrat Muhammad has been sent as His messenger for the whole humanity and similarly Islamic teachings presents a complete code of life for the whole human race. Whosoever will abide by the commandments of Allah would get success and salvation. Even those who do not accept the Prophet hood of Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W) are dear to Allah as his creation and to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) as they are human beings and the crown creation of Allah Almighty. It is the duty of the Muslims to protect the honour, life

and properties of those who do not believe in the Prophet hood of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W).

Comparison of the Concepts of War in the Semitic Religions:

The West is itself horrified and spreading horror and terror in the world by using the terms of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism. There follows a comparison of the concepts of war in the three Semitic Religions to clarify the truth.

Islam and the Concept of War:

Allah almighty says in the Holy Qura'an as:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَقْرَبُوا مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُكْفِرِينَ - (البقره، ٢: ١٩٠)

And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you and do not transgress the limits, Allah surely does not like the transgressors.(21)

At another place in the Holy Qura'an, Allah Almighty commands:

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُبْتَغُونَ بَأْسَهُمْ أَنْ يَهْمُوكُمْ وَأَنْ يَتَرَفَّعُوا عَلَيْكُمْ سَوَاعِدَهُمْ أَنْ يَصْرَفَهُمْ تَوَارِثًا مِمَّا كَفَرْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ دِينِكُمْ يُبْغَىٰ عَنْهَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ مُبْتَلِيًا - (البقره، ٢: ١٩١)

وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ - (البقره، ٢: ٢٠١)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ - (الناس، ١: ١١٣)

Permission (of defensive fight) is given to such ones on whom the disbelievers thrust war, because cruelties are committed against them. And surely, Allah is powerful to help them (to victory). Such ones were expelled from their homes without a just cause because they said. "Our Rubb (sustainer) is Allah". And had Allah not repelled some people by means of others, the churches, the monasteries, the synagogues and mosque, wherein the Name of Allah is too much remembered, would have been pulled down.(22)

Further, defining the rules of war, Allah Almighty commands in the Holy Quraan as:

وَإِنْ قَاتَلْتُمُوهُمْ فَاتْلُوهُمْ ذَكَاةً كَمَا كَانُوا لِقَاكُمْ فِي الْحَرْبِ مُبْغِضِينَ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ مُبْتَلِيًا - (البقره، ٢: ١٩١)

One who does violence against you attach him in the like methods as he did against you.(23)

The essence of the orders which the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) passed on while sending the Muslims on the wars follows as under

Go ahead in the Name of Allah with His blessings for the Holy war. Do not kill the old people, children and ladies. Collect the leavings of the enemy honestly. Try to improve the conditions. Behave with the enemy in a good

manner. Do not cheat any one. Do not kill injured enemy. Do not disrespect any dead body of the enemy. Those people who have not participated in the war should not be killed. Do not harm those religious leaders who have abandoned the worldly life. Do not destroy the religious worship places. Do not destroy the cultivated fields and do not cut the trees.(24)

Judaism and Concept of War:

The rules of war have been described in detail in the Old Testament as:

And when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally, and show them no mercy.(25)

At another place in the Old Testament, it is written about those cities which are captured during war as:

When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labour and shall work for you. If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. When the Lord your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all men in it.(26)

Christianity and concept of War:

It is said that the Christ (A.S) preached peace and love in stead of war and his address at the mountain is quoted as a proof. He said; "Love you enemy. Serve him even those who have enmity with you. He who curses you, you should even pray for him. He who slapped you, you should also offer him your other cheek". However, these teachings are against the dignity of man, even then in normal cricumstances they may be regarded only moral. He himself believed in the war; however there is no commandment in detail about war in the New Testament. There is quoted a saying of the Christ (A.S) in the New Testament as:

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did come to turn.(27)

Similarly, there is motivation to get sword at another place in the New Testament as:

He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, like it and also a bag and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.(28)

Conclusion:

If the concepts, objectives and commandments of war are analyzed in the light of the heavenly books of the three Semitic Religions, the practical position comes out like that. There is concept of war in Christianity, but the objectives and instructions have not been defined and everything is left to the human beings and the same fact has created problems and destruction. In Judaism, there is concept as well as objectives of war, but war is meant to occupy the property, cities and countries, further the commandments regarding war are very cruel meant for the destruction and killing of the opponents.

Whereas, Islam sets high objectives for the war, these objectives include to fight for the promotion of peace and to end the oppression and cruelty that is why the war has been given the sacred name of, 'Jihad'. Further, it is forbidden to kill the aged ones, children and women in the war. It is not allowed to disgrace the dead bodies of the enemies. It is obligatory for the Muslims to behave well with the prisoners of war.

A comparative study of two very important issues that have been presented above proves the distinctive superiority of Islam. It is very important that the learned scholar of Islam should shake off the cowardice and with resolution they must present the universal teachings of Islam to the Jews and the Christians. Similarly, the peace loving Christian leaders should get rid of the concept of the Crucifix wars. They should try to understand the message the humanitarian message of Islam. If the Jew and Christian scholars study without any bias the teachings of Islam, they will understand without any doubt that Islamic teachings provide the guarantee for the international peace and prosperity.

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