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**Islam is the Religion of Peace**

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**Allah Most Exalted says in His Majestic Book :**

{ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا كُنتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَن كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُّبِينٌ (15) يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (16( } المائدة.

**Dedication**

This research is dedicated with love and affection

TO MY PARENTS

AND

 MY TEACHER KHLOOD ELAKKAWI

Who,

 have inspired me while doing the research

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**Introduction**

The word Islam means submission to Allah the Almighty, the Creator and Lord of all creation, with the entire soul and body, by obedience to what He commanded and prohibited in His Revealed Law, by compliance and willful yielding of one’s will to His Will and Judgments, and by acceptance of all that Allah has predestined for man on earth. Allah is the Most Beneficent and Merciful who knows all man’s rightful needs, who enjoins all that is good and warns against all that is evil. Thus His revealed Law is perfectly suited to the universal needs, rights and responsibilities of man.

The word “Salam” means “Peace" and is derived from the same Arabic three-letter root **SLM** as the word Islam. “Salam” is one of the Attributes of Allah, blessed be His Names and Attributes and Exalted His Majesty, "Salam" is also one of the names of Jannah (Paradise).

Muslims exchange the purified and noble greetings “As-Salamu Alaikum” (Peace be upon you) when they meet, when they pass by one another, when they call one another. Even when a Muslim enters his own home and finds no one there, he says as-Salamu Alaikum since he offers this greeting upon the angels who are present in that place and upon himself. This form of greeting helps to relieve the hearts from all forms of enmity and grudges and rancor people may keep within them, replacing it with good will, mutual respect, tranquility, security and happiness.

Often Muslims greet one another by saying the fuller version, which has been taught by the Prophet of Allah: 'As-Salamu Alaikum wa rahmatul'laah' i.e. “**May Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon you, and His Mercy**.”

Islam comprises the complete comprehensive meaning of peace that includes the inner personal and spiritual peace and the outer social peace. As the Messenger of Allah () said: “A true Muslim is the person from whom other Muslims feel secured against abuse and attacks from his tongue and hands, and a true immigrant is a person who forsakes what Allah the Almighty has declared unlawful.” (Bukhari & Muslim)

Moreover, it includes the global vision of general universal peace for all humanity, since its basic principles include stability, mutual respect, and non-aggression to those who abide peacefully.

**Problems**

* Misconception that Islam is the religion of war and spread by force.

* Misconception that worldly gains were the aim of the Islamic.

**Questions of the Study**

* Why Islam is the religion of peace ?
* What acts prohibited in Islam which help promote peace ?
* How Islam enjoins recommendations to promote peace ?

**Review of Literature**

**The Misconception that Islam Was Spread by Force**

One misconception, promoted by the enemies of justice who do not read of the historical sources impartially but rehash old propaganda over and over again, is the false accusation that Islam was spread by compulsion and coercion. Various scriptures from the Majestic Qur’an can rebut this vile slander.

Allah Most Exalted says in His Majestic Book:

{Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects Taghoot (Satan, idols, tyrants, etc) and believes in Allah, has grasped the most trustworthy hand hold that never breaks. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.} (2:256)

This and many other verses of the Qur’an and teachings of Prophetic traditions make it clear that no coercion or compulsion in religion is allowed: no one is ever to be forced against his will to convert to Islam. Faith must be by knowledge and free will and based upon firm conviction in the heart, followed by the testimony of correct words and good deeds.

It is known that someone cannot be forced to change what is in the depths of his heart, and that one may profess with his tongue what he does not really believe with certainty: this is not Islam nor Islamic faith. For this reason Allah said the following about the one compelled under torture to renounce his faith in Islam:

{Anyone who utters words of disbelief after accepting Faith in Allah - except under compulsion while his heart remains firm in Faith - such as one who opens his breast to disbelief, on them is Wrath from Allah, and there will be a dreadful Penalty for them.} (16:106)

Another accusation related to the above is that Islam was spread by force of arms and warfare. It is an established fact that any system or government, regardless of its source, requires a protective force to defend it adherents, preserve its values, spread its principles, ensure a fair application of its law, and enforce the just execution of legal penalties against criminals and those who rebel against the system.

The Messenger of Allah Muhammad () after his commission from Allah to arise and publicize his divine message, remained in the sacred city of Makkah for thirteen years inviting his people of the Quraish tribe and the visitors of Makkah to Islam. He engaged every possible way to inform and convey the message of the revelations of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, encountering false accusations, slander, persecutions, harassment, boycotts, threats, attacks, and brutal physical aggression from his people. Even in these dire circumstances Allah the Most Wise and Merciful commanded His Messenger Muhammad () to be patient, forbearing and tolerant with his people while propagating the message.

**The Misconception that Worldly Gains were the Aim of the Islamic Conquests**

A third and related accusation is that the swift Islamic conquests, which startled the known world and by which the Muslim faith was able to spread East and West, were primarily only for war booty, worldly pleasures, fame and glory.

There is fact worthy of noting is that the letters that the Prophet () sent to the prominent kings, governors and rulers of neighboring countries were very clear in allowing them to keep their positions of leadership, dominations, and possessions if they accepted Islam and preserved peace and justice.

Emperors, nationalistic leaders, their generals and warriors seek after glory, land and booty, but the facts above prove that the aim of the Messenger of Allah () was to spread the religion of Islam to mankind by peaceful means for their benefit, and leave them alone in earning their livelihood and fulfilling their material needs as they pleased within the boundaries of Islam.

The booty and spoils of warfare the early Muslims gained by their conquests were sufficient to let them lead a prosperous and gracious life, but the real motive behind the conquests was to call other peoples to the Word of Allah and the religion of Islam, proven by the fact that the conquered peoples were given the freedom of choice to accept Islam as a religion and way of life, and if they did, they would be entitled to all the rights of the other Muslims. If the conquered people rejected Islam, and remained upon the religion but they did not declare war against the Muslims, they were required to pay the Jizyah (“Head Tax”) a symbolic amount of tax in exchange for the protection of their lives, properties and wealth guaranteed and secured by the Islamic state.

Additionally, payers of the head tax would enjoy all public facilities offered and maintained by the Islamic state and were not required to pay any additional taxes whereas Muslims, on the other hand, were required to pay the Zakah (obligatory charity on accumulated wealth, the sum of two and half percent of their annually accumulated funds or a specified amount of agricultural and husbandry produce). Zakah is often much more than what the amount of the head tax is annually. If the non-Muslims in a conquered land refuse to accept either option, and choose to remain belligerent, war would be waged against them in order to deliver the Message of Islam to the people in general. The essential reason for waging a war against other non-Muslims is the fact that, some inhabitants of such non-Islamic countries may, embrace Islam, have they known its principles and mission. For this essential and noble objective, Allah Knows best, Islam imposes on Muslims to wage wars in order to deliver the Message of Allah to the non-Muslims.

**Islamic Principles Enjoin Mercy and Condemn Aggression**

The Divine religion of Islam is a religion of peace, mercy, tolerance, kindness and benevolence. It stands upright against all brutality, wanton violence, and viciousness in order to promote and protect justice and peace.

Allah the Wise and Sublime characterizes the mission of Muhammad () as a mercy to all, when He said Most Exalted: {We have not sent you but as a Mercy for all creation. } (21:108)

The teachings of Islam call all Muslims to show mercy and kindness to every innocent and poor person. The Prophet of Allah () said:

“The merciful and kind people will receive the Mercy of the Merciful Lord, Allah, the Almighty. Be merciful to people on earth, and Allah, the Almighty, Who is in Heaven, will grant you His Mercy.” (Tirmidthi)

Furthermore, Islam requires that mercy and kind treatment should be meted out to all people, even to the enemies of the Muslims captured during the jihad, as in the command of the Prophet of Allah's Messenger () when he said: “Be kind and merciful to the captives” [see Al-Mu'jammal-Kabeer, The Grand Dictionary of Hadith. 22/393[.

If the Prophet () commanded this command to Muslims concerning the hostile enemies who are fighting against them, then the treatment towards the peaceful people would naturally be even better.

Islamic mercy and kindness, not to mention the prohibition of taking life unjustly, is not limited to human beings but includes animals and all living creatures as well.

The companion Abdullah ibn Omar () is reported to have passed by a group of young men from the tribe of Quraish who had captured a bird and set it up as a shooting target. He said: 'Who placed this bird as a shooting target? May Allah's Curse descend on the person who did this! The Messenger of Allah () said: “Allah the Almighty curses the person who captures and sets any living creature as a shooting target” (Bukhari & Muslim)

Allah's Messenger () commanded Muslims to show kindness in every action, even when slaughtering an animal, by the words: “Allah, the Almighty, prescribes perfection in every action. If you kill, be perfect in your killing. If you slaughter an animal for meat, perfect your act of slaughtering. Sharpen your knife and be good, kind, and merciful to the animal you are about to slaughter. Give the slaughtered animal the best comfort you can while being slaughtered.” (Muslim).

**Islam Enjoins Believers to Observe the Following Moral Obligations and Recommendations to Promote Peace**

-> Islam enjoins justice

Justice and fairness are commanded and required in all situations, when one is happy and satisfied, and when one is upset and unsatisfied, with Muslims and with non-Muslims alike. Allah the Exalted and Almighty said:{O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to Piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-aware with all that you do. } (5:8)

-> Islam enjoins altruism

Philanthropy and benevolence are the results of sincere altruism, and the companions of the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him were especially noteworthy of this trait, offering their help and assistance to others solely for the Pleasure of Allah.

Allah the Exalted and Almighty says:

{And do good. Truly Allah loves those who do good. } (2:195)

-> Islam enjoins brotherhood

The Messenger of Allah () said: "A Muslim is a brother to a Muslim. He should neither deceive him nor lie to him, nor leave him without assistance. Everything belonging to a Muslim is inviolable for a Muslim; his honor, his blood and property. Piety is here (and he pointed out to his chest thrice). It is enough for a Muslim to commit evil by despising his Muslim brother." (Tirmidthi)

-> Islam enjoins reconciliation and peace making

Reconciliation is enjoined at all times and especially when there is a serious rift in relationship that may lead to increased conflict.

Allah the Almighty and Exalted said: {The Believers are but brothers so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear God, that you may receive Mercy. } (49:10)

The above examples are mere glimpses of what Islam commands Muslims to comply with in their personal and public lives for the Pleasure of Allah. The Book of Allah, the Qur’an, and the Sunnah of Allah's Messenger, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, provide additional commands and details related to these and other high and noble morals.

**Examples of Acts Prohibited in Islam which Help Promote Peace**

Islam has denounced and condemned vehemently the following acts and strictly prohibited their practice in the path of promoting peace and security in the society, and eradicating or curtailing wrath, hatred, rancor, greed, and resentment which are the root causes of conflicts and violence.

-> Polytheism and Idolatry

Polytheism and idolatry inevitably cause conflict as clans, tribes and peoples compete and vie for recognition, status, dominance and tribute for their idols and associated ideologies and mythologies. If all people worshipped Allah the one and only God then the greatest root of violence would be eradicated.

Allah the Most Majestic said: {And ask those of Our messengers whom we sent before you, 'Did we make other deities to be worshipped besides Allah? } (43:45)

-> Sorcery and magic of all types

The hadith of Allah's Messenger () :

“Avoid the seven destructive things. People inquired: O Prophet of Allah! ‘What are these destructive things?’ He said: “They are: associating others in the worship of Allah; sorcery and magic of all types; killing an innocent soul without any legitimate reason; dealing with interest and usury; eating up and abusing the orphan's funds; fleeing from the battlefield; falsely accusing innocent female believers with fornication, adultery, or moral corruption.” (Bukhari & Muslim)

-> Aggression and oppression

Allah, the Exalted, said:

{Those who believe fight in the way of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the way of taghoot (Satan, idols, tyrants). So fight against the followers of Satan: Indeed the plot of Satan is feeble. } (4:76)

-> Adultery, fornication, slander… etc

It is a known fact that much conflict, fighting and murder takes place due to “love triangles” wherein people fight over their legal or illegal sexual partners. Islam has cut all the pathways to illegal sexual relations to preserve the chastity and purity of the people of the society, and to prevent conflict, illegitimate children and abortion.

Allah the Exalted and Almighty said: {Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil way, opening the road (to many other evils). } (17:32) **Conclusion**

Islam builds the foundation for friendly relationships between men on the principles of public and mutual interests of all the parties concerned. Never is there to be any compulsion or force for the acceptance of Islam.

Islam wishes well for all regardless of color, creed, geographic location and nationality. Its laws and principles promote universal modes of righteousness, benevolence and justice.

Muslims are commanded to love for the cause of Allah and hate for the cause of Allah, and never for any other special interests, worldly desires or whims. One does not love or hate the person per say, but loves the good and hates the evil shown by the behavior of that person.

Islam brings people from the darkness of ignorance and injustice, to the true light of guidance and justice.

Islam educates all Muslims to be peaceful, forgiving, patient and caring. Islam seeks all means to establish social justice in the society and protect the rights of all citizens of the Islamic state and encompasses them all in its welfare system. Islam exhorts upon Muslims to be good to others without expecting a favor rather seeking the reward from Allah, their Lord Most Bountiful.

Islam educates Muslims to respect and honor the divine instructions and laws so that every member in the society feels secure, safe and peaceful, except those who, by their criminal activities, deserve to be punished with justice for transgression.

Islam educates Muslims to be selfless and to like for others as they wish for themselves so that the entire society benefits: the old are to be kind to the young and minor; the young are to be merciful, respectful and helpful to the old; the rich to be generous to the poor; all should seek to aid the needy.

**Significance of the Study**

Calling for Islam and correcting its image are of the main objectives of this study.

Due to the negative image of Islam and Muslims in the West which is mainly inherited from the medieval ages and caused by prejudices against Islam and its followers, such we are as Muslims should play an effective role to correct this negative image.

**Limitation of the Study**

To non-Muslims who think that Islam is religion of war and Sword

**Definition of terms**

**Conquests :** Anything acquired by conquering, as a nation, a territory, or spoils.

**Slander :** A malicious, false, and defamatory statement or report.

**Booty :** Spoil taken from an enemy in war; plunder; pillage.

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