

The concept of peace in Islam

If you read the Quran carefully you will find that it is a book of peace. For example, the very first verse of the Quran reads: *In the name of God, the Most Merciful, the most Compassionate.*

This verse, which is repeated in the Quran 114 times, clearly shows that the God of Islam is the God of Mercy and Compassion, and the book of Islam too is the book of mercy. The people of Islam must also possess the quality of mercy and compassion, otherwise they could not be true believers.

If you go through the Quran you will find that from most verses, either directly or indirectly there emanates the spirit of peace. There is a verse which says 'And God calls to the home of peace.' (10:25) This means that the destination of Islam is peace. All the teachings of Islam are oriented towards the goal of peace.

Another example: 'Reconciliation is the best.' (4:128) When there is a conflict between two individuals or two groups, Muslims ought to follow the course of reconciliation. In controversial matters, the policy of Islam is one of adjustment and not of confrontation.

If you make a detailed study of the Quran you will discover many verses which deal with the objects and events of the universe, as signs of nature. These verses project the universe as a model of peace and harmony. There are innumerable astronomical bodies in space. All are in motion, but all follow their own orbits without the slightest deviation. Holding up this phenomenon as an ideal, the Quran asks us to follow the same course of peace, that is, to move in one's own orbit and not trespass (3:83). Thus peaceful living is the religion for both: man and the universe.

Now I would like to present examples from the traditions of the Prophet. Once a man came to the Prophet and asked, "O Prophet, give me a master advice which will enable me to manage all the affairs of my life." The Prophet told him: "Don't be angry."

That is to say, stick to positive behaviour

Horizons



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in all situations. In fact, in normal conditions man is governed by his own nature. And nature always takes the course of peace. When people are provoked their nature is upset, and they are derailed into negativity. So the Prophet advised people never to take a negative course of action, and to keep to peaceful and positive behaviour in all situations, even in the face of provocation.

According to another tradition, the Prophet of Islam once observed: Don't wish for confrontation with your enemy, instead always ask for peace from God.

This means that even when they have enemies, Muslims are not allowed to take the course of confrontation. They must rather seek the way of avoidance. The Quran further states

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that if you deal with your enemy positively and return good for evil, he will become your closest friend (41:34). These references from the Quran and Sunnah make it clear that peace is the greatest concern of Islam. The Islamic method is a peaceful method. Islamic activism is a peaceful activism.

Why does Islam lay such a great emphasis on peace? Because all the good things which Islam wants to see in human life can be brought about only in peaceful environment. For instance, such constructive activities like spiritual uplift, character building, educational activity, social welfare, worship and prayer — and above all *dawah* work, can be performed only in peaceful conditions. No peace, no progress; no peace, no development.

Peace in Islam is not required for the sake of peace. It is required for the sake of Allah, that is for the sake of a great purpose. It is because no Islamic activity can be carried out except in peaceful conditions. Due to this great importance, the Prophet of Islam always wanted to maintain peace even at the price of unilateral adjustment.

Some people portray the picture of Islam as a religion of violence by using the word Jihad. They say that Jihad in Islam is a holy war. But there is no concept of holy war in Islam. Jihad has nothing to do with war or violence, it actually means a struggle, a peaceful struggle. 'And make Jihad on them, with the help of the Quran' (25:52), says the Quran. Nowhere does it say, 'with the help of the sword'.

Clearly, Jihad is an act to be performed by the power of ideology rather than the power of the sword; it is only another name for peaceful activism along Islamic lines.

The Quran says that on the day of the Judgement, God will say: 'O peaceful soul, come and enter my paradise' (89:28). And only those who have followed the path of peace in this world will be allowed an entrance into God's Paradise.