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THE CONTEMPORARY ETHICAL CHALLENGES AND HUMANITY

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Abstract: Currently, humanity is facing several ethical challenges due to a lack of proper understanding of ethical approaches. Generally, scholars and intellectuals have interpreted ethics in terms of the science of morality, which has defeated the true purpose of ethics. This paper, based on a qualitative method of content analysis, argues that ethics should be understood in its original sense as a branch of philosophy which connotes a rational search for understanding the truth and reality of anything in terms of good and bad implications. It is contended that due to the speculative and conjectural nature of philosophy, or pure rational and empirical approach is overlooked for the study of the needs of humanity. This paper explores and explains a few important ethical challenges that are related to humanity at large and disregard of national and racial demarcations. Finally, it concludes that humanity needs a new and fresh perspective on its problems from a pure ethical point of view. If an ethical approach to the study of the problem of humanity is adopted, most of the problems, such as the environmental crisis and the poverty crisis, can be solved.

Keywords: Ethical Challenges, Humanity, Ethical Approach, Environmental Crisis, Poverty.

Introduction

One can speak on any subject, either based on speculation or knowledge. What is better? When we refer to the relationship between humanity and Islam, we need to speak based on

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knowledge - True, Authentic, and Universal Knowledge [TAUK]. Relativism has rejected the possibility of TAUK, hence, to resolve the issues of metaphysical reality, the proponent of relativism depends on speculative method. Most people think that, so far as metaphysical issues related to the origin and development of humans are concerned, we are at the mercy of speculation and conjecture. We do not have any True, Authentic, and Universal body of knowledge. *Al-Qur'ān* rejects this position and argues that we cannot erect the building of culture and civilization based on the uncertainty of speculation, conjecture, assumptions, imaginations, doctrines, guesswork, myths, and dogmas. We need to have a strong foundation of knowledge, empirical evidence, historical proofs, and powerful rational arguments. An ethical search for a true, authentic, and universal foundation of life and the world is not only imperative but essential. A fresh ethical search is needed. As humans, we feel proud to declare that we possess the intellect and all other faculties that make us a unique creature among all other creatures. Therefore, we had made claims that we are the actual actors of the world and societies. It is we humans who are superior, independent, and capable of running the affairs of the social world, if not the affairs of the natural world, but despite our failures in many areas, we still make claims that we are also talented to study, explain, and interpretate and predict the natural phenomena. We have been able to develop Artificial Intelligence. With the help of AI, it is claimed we would be able to know the time of our death. All this may be true, but the empirical statistics and evidence say something else. Hence, we need to refresh our understanding of the relationship between humans, humanity, universality, and Islam if we wish to have a peaceful, harmonious, and healthy life on this earth.

Need for A Fresh Look at Our Method of Understanding

Al-Qur'ān, the normative source of Islam, makes certain basic claims repeatedly and invites people of thinking and understanding to think about the following statements which have been made in *al-Qur'ān*¹:

Should you follow their desires, disregarding the knowledge which has come to you, you shall have no protector or helper against Allah [2: 120].

Were you to follow their desires in disregard of the knowledge which has come to you, you will surely be reckoned among the wrongdoers [2: 145].

¹ The researcher has referred to the English translation of the Quranic verses to - *Towards Understanding al-Qur'ān*. (2006). Abridged version of *Tafhim al-Qur'ān*, [translation and commentary of *al-Qur'ān* by Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi in Urdu] again translated and edited in English by Zafar Ishaq Ansari. The Islamic Foundation, Leicester.

...and Allah granted him dominion and wisdom and imparted to him the knowledge of whatever He willed [2: 251].

The true din [worldview] with Allah is Islam. The People of the Book adopted many ways rather than follow the True way of Islam even after the knowledge of Truth had reached them, and this merely to commit excesses against one another. [3: 19]

Tell whoever disputes with you on this matter after true knowledge has come to you: “Come! Let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves, and then let us pray together and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie.” [3: 61]

There has now come to you a light from Allah, and a clear Book through which Allah shows to all who seek to please Him the paths leading to safety. He brings them out, by His leave, from darkness to light and directs them on to the straightway [5: 15-16].

And were you indeed to follow the vain desires of people after the true knowledge had come to you, none will be your supporters against Allah, and none will have the power to shield you from His punishment [13: 37].

Those who were endowed with knowledge [in the world] will say: [16: 27]. Tell them, [O Prophet!]: ‘Believe in it, or do not believe’; when it is recited to those who were given the knowledge before its revelation, they fall down upon their faces in prostration [17: 107].

...there they found one of Our servants upon whom We had bestowed Our mercy, and to whom We had imparted a special knowledge from Ourselves [18: 65].

No One Has the Knowledge of the Unseen

It is also made clear that speculation and conjecture are not a substitute for true, authentic, and universal knowledge. There are several statements that deal with speculation and conjecture and demonstrate that man has no knowledge of the metaphysical realities. It is appropriate for man to depend on that knowledge which had been granted to man through the process of revelation called Islamic revealed knowledge. The Islamic revealed knowledge also demonstrates that it is true, authentic, and universal. It fulfils all analytical and critical criteria.

Do you attribute to Allah something about which you have no knowledge [2: 80]. ... [Do not] ascribe to Allah the things concerning which you have no knowledge [that He really is their source] [2: 169].

...why are you now disputing concerning matters that you know nothing about? Allah knows it whereas you do not know [3: 66].

...They have no definite knowledge of it, ... [4: 157].

Many indeed say misleading things without knowledge, [6:119].

Who, then, would be more unjust than he who fabricates a lie against Allah that he may lead people astray without knowledge?... [6: 144]

... Say: “Surely Allah never enjoins any indecency. Do you say things regarding Allah that you do not know?” [7: 28]

Do you ascribe to Allah something of which you have no knowledge? [10: 68]

... [they say] about which they have no knowledge, neither they nor their ancestors. ... What they utter is merely a lie. [18: 1-5]

And among people are those that wrangle [argue] about Allah without knowledge, without any true guidance, and without any scripture to enlighten them. [22: 8]

August Comte, the father of modern sociology, spoke about the origin of life and its development based on speculation. He did not develop his ideas based on true, authentic, and universal knowledge. Thinkers and philosophers who discussed and developed their ideas followed speculation and conjecture. All ideas related to religion, philosophy, ethics, and science are based on the speculative method.

Contemporary Ethical Challenges

In this section, the following issues are discussed to reflect on the contemporary ethical challenges.

Humanity: Oneness of Humanity and Universality of Islam

And We bestowed upon Abraham [his offspring] Ishaq [Isaac] and Yaqub [Jacob] and each of them did we guide to the Right Way as We had earlier guided Noah to the Right Way; and [of his descendants We guided] Daud [David] and Sulayman [Solomon], Ayyub [Job], Yusuf [Joseph], Musa [Moses] and Harun [Aaron]. Thus, do We reward those who do good. [6: 84] [And of his descendants We guided] Zakariya [Zechariah], Yahya [John], Isa [Jesus] and Ilyas [Elias]: each one of them was of the righteous. [6:85] [And of his descendants We guided] Ismail [Ishmael], al-Yasa [Elisha], Yunus [Jonah], and Lut [Lot]. And each one of them We favoured over all mankind. [6: 86] Likewise We elected for Our cause and guided on to a Straight Way some of their forefathers and their offspring and their brethren. [6: 87]

For the last hundred years, in modern times, Muslim intellectuals and scholars have argued and emphasized that Islam should not be taken as merely a religion in its limited sense. Despite several articles and books on this issue, most scholars and so-called religious experts and representatives in the contemporary world comfortably use the term religion for Islam. Nowadays, many of them emphatically compare Islam with other religions in terms of faith, doctrine, and personal moral behavior. They also argue that Islam is the youngest religion among the world's known religions. They say that after Christianity and Judaism, Islam is 'one of the most studied religions in the world'². Most scholars focus on religious doctrines when

² Cornell, Vincent J., *Voices of Islam*, (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2007), p. vii.

they write about Islam. They compare Islam with other religions and use the phrase “Ibrahmic religions”. They do not feel anything wrong when they argue ‘Islam is as much an “Asian” religion as Hinduism or Buddhism.... Islam is now as much of a worldwide religion as Christianity’³. They do not have the proper understanding of Islam, as to understand Islam, they do not refer to the normative source of Islam – *al-Qur’ān*. Many people think that the Prophet Muhammad [P.B.U.H.] is the founder of Islam. They think Islam began with the time of the Prophet Muhammad [P.B.U.H.] during the seventh century Christian era. This is the reason that many scholars comfortably use the phrase ‘before Islam’. They do not realize that Islam began with the beginning of life on this earth, as *al-Qur’ān* claims. In this way, the distortion and misrepresentation of Islam on a large scale continues. It is not only the distortion of truth and misrepresentation of Islam but also a disservice to humanity. It is presented as a religion of Muslims. A powerful movement of Islamophobia has been created. Based on the study of *al-Qur’ān*, we know Islam is not a human construct in a sociological sense, hence, it is obligatory on those who understand the truth of Islam to explain to others that it was revealed to mankind by the Creator of this universe, Allah SWT, to guide mankind. This article aims to present Islam in its proper perspective of Truth and reality as the worldview and the way of life in a time and space context.

Misunderstandings about Islam

In modern times in the West and elsewhere Islam has been considered as a religion and religion of Muslims, a human artifact manufactured by human beings. Therefore, it is taken subject to evolution towards higher forms. Being a religion, it is confined to the personal and private life of man and secular approach to life is encouraged. I have realized based on the reading of *al-Qur’ān* it considers this kind of understanding and presentation of Islam as fallacious and false and contends forcefully that “Islam is not a religion or faith in the modern Western sense, nor is it linked with their sort of power, politics, and state. It cannot be reduced to any of them, though it must include each of them. Even an outside observer, if not some Muslim, can plainly see that: ‘It cannot be repeated too often that Islam is ‘not merely a religion’. It is a total and unified way of life, both religious and secular; it is a set of beliefs and a way of worship; it is a vast and integrated system of law; it is a culture and a civilization; it is an economic system and a way of doing business; it is a polity and a method of governance; it is a special sort of society and a way of running a family; it

³ *Ibid*, p. viii.

prescribes for inheritance and divorce, dress and etiquette, food, and personal hygiene. It is a spiritual and human totality, this worldly and otherworldly'. Hence, 'religion and politics are two sides of a single coin in Islam'"⁴. If it is taken as a religion, then al-Attas argues that:

The Western concept of religion does not...come under the category of revealed religion in the strict sense as applicable to Islam. We cannot accept, to mention a scientific example of categorization of some religions, as revealed religions...For us it is for the most part a sophisticated form of culture religions, distinguished only by the fact that they claims possession of a revealed Book which, though partly true, it nevertheless was not intended nor authorized by that Book to call upon mankind universally in the manner that a revealed religion was called upon to do from the very beginning without need of further 'development' in the religion itself and its sacred laws. A revealed religion, as we understand, it is complete and perfect in its adequacy for mankind from the very beginning. *Al-Qur'ān* says that Islam is already made completely and perfect for mankind, and this claim to completion and perfection is substantiated from its very beginning by history. The name Islam was given to the religion from the very beginning just as the name Muslim was given to denote the adherents of the religion from the very start...so Islam...is always relevant, is always adequate, is always 'modern' or new, is always ahead of time because it transcends history...and is not subject to the kind of self-searching 'evolution' and 'development'...Since Islam is the religion which transcends the influences of human 'evolution' and historicity, the values embodied in it are absolute...Islam has its worldview⁵.

Al-Qur'ān on Islam

In *al-Qur'ān* for Islam, the Arabic word *Dīn* is used, which has become an important term and "signifies the way of life, the system of conduct, and the code on which man bases his entire mode of thought and action"⁶. For Allah SWT, there is only one *Dīn* - Islam [worldview, system or the way of life and source of conduct] which is designed and instructed by Allah SWT, the Creator of the entire universe. Islam is presented in *al-Qur'ān* by Allah SWT as the most suitable way of life for mankind. This means two things: man needs to acknowledge Allah SWT as his Creator and Lord, and the sole object of obedience and devotion, and follow Islam as the system of life. In this sense, from a pure literal sense, Islam means submission. Hence, man should consciously submit to Allah SWT and seek His guidance. This worldview, the way of life, mode of thinking, and living, is called Islam. Hence, Islam is presented in *al-Qur'ān* as *Dīn*, which means, in truth and reality, the *dīn*

⁴ Murad, Khurram, *Islamic Movement in the West*. (Islamic Foundation, 1981), p. 28.

⁵ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, (Kuala Lumpur: IBIM, 2014), pp. 27-28.

⁶ Sayyid Abul 'Ala Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam (Vol. 1)*. (Indianapolis: Islamic Teaching Center, 1979), p. 114.

which is the only *Dīn* that is acceptable by Allah SWT. “The True Din [Way of Life] with Allah is Islam [3: 19]. “We sent you with the Truth as a bearer of good tidings and a warner!” [2: 119]. It means whatever is said about Islam in *al-Qur’ān* is true. *Al-Qur’ān* presents Islam as *Dīn*, the way of life that was given to the first Prophet Adam [P.B.U.H.] and later to all the Prophets [P.B.U.T.] who followed and transmitted it as the most appropriate way of life to all people throughout the ages. “This is a definite Truth from your Lord; be not, then, among the doubters”⁷. In this sense, Islam, and only Islam, is universal. According to *al-Qur’ān*, the Book of Allah SWT, all religions and ideologies are historical and products of the human mind. Allah SWT granted to mankind ‘the knowledge of the Truth and clear guidance’⁸. What is this knowledge of the Truth? It is the knowledge of the metaphysical world. Allah SWT has granted us *true knowledge*⁹ of the metaphysical world, so that in the light of which we can understand the true meaning of Islam and *Dīn*. The Prophet Muhammad [P.B.U.H.], being the last Prophet [P.B.U.H.], revived it on the Order of Allah SWT. It is Allah SWT Who taught the Prophet Muhammad [P.B.U.H.] everything about Islam. People and nations are free either to follow him or reject him. *Al-Qur’ān* claims that the Prophet Muhammad [P.B.U.H.] never added anything from his side. Whatever he communicated was given to him by Allah SWT. This truth stands based on sound reasons and empirical and historical evidence. This is the reason that the claim of some people that all religions or ways of life are true and lead to the Path of God is rejected by *al-Qur’ān*, as it is not supported by empirical and historical evidence. Hence, the ideology of religious pluralism is criticized in *al-Qur’ān* as the position of liberalism and religious pluralism go against the truth and reality of life and the world, so far as the knowledge of *al-Qur’ān* is concerned.

***Al-Qur’ān* Speaks about Islam as *Dīn* - The Way of Life Approved by Allah SWT – The Creator and Sustainer**

Islam means submission to Allah SWT, and one who submits is called a Muslim. A Muslim submits unreservedly himself and willingly and consciously acknowledges Allah SWT alone as his Lord, Master, and Creator. Henceforth, man is expected to undertake responsibility to live life in accordance with the guidance that has been granted to mankind by Allah SWT through the process of Revelation. *Al-Qur’ān* is the last revelation. All this knowledge is

⁷ *Al-Qur’ān*, 2: 147.

⁸ *Al-Qur’ān*, 2: 213.

⁹ *Al-Qur’ān*, 3: 61.

given to man by Allah SWT. Therefore, this understanding constitutes the core message of all the Prophets [P.B.U.T.] who had appeared from the beginning of life on earth among various peoples and in different times and places. According to *al-Qur'ān*, all the Prophets [P.B.U.T.] presented before mankind the same *Dīn* – Islam [the way of life]. Likewise, every revealed Book, “in whichever language it was revealed, and to whichever people it was addressed, contained the teachings of Islam¹⁰”. These teachings are relevant to their time and place. The various schools of thought that had emerged throughout the ages in the name of religion have been subject to the distortion of Islam. Look what has been said in *al-Qur'ān* about the Prophet Abraham [P.B.U.H.]:

...it is We Who chose Abraham for Our mission in this world, and surely in the World to Come he shall be counted among the righteous¹¹. Such was Abraham that when his Lord said to him: “Submit,” he said: “I have submitted to the Lord of the Universe¹²”. And Abraham enjoined the same upon his children, and so did Jacob: “My children! Behold, Allah has chosen this *Dīn* for you. Remain till death in submission [to Allah]¹³. Why were you witnesses when death came to Jacob? He asked his children: “Whom will you submit [serve] after me?” They said: “We shall submit [serve] Your God, the God of your forefathers, Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, the One God, and unto Him do we submit¹⁴”.

In the above verse, the Arabic word *Muslim* is used from which the term Islam was derived. This shows that the Prophet Abraham [P.B.U.H.] was a Muslim and he followed Islam and directed his progeny to Islam as the right and true way of life approved by Allah SWT. In the beginning, mankind followed one single way of life – *Dīn* – Islam as *al-Qur'ān* claims. Later, this state ended, and differences arose. Then Allah sent forth the Prophets [P.B.U.T.] as heralds of good tidings for the righteous and as warners against the consequences of evil-doing. It is further said in *al-Qur'ān*:

In the beginning mankind followed one single way. [Later on, this state ended, and differences arose.] Then Allah sent forth Prophets [P.B.U.T.] as heralds of good tidings for the righteous and as warners against the consequences of evil-doing. He sent down with them the Book embodying the Truth so that it might judge among people in their disputes. And those who innovated divergent ways rather than follow the Truth were none other than those who had received the knowledge of the Truth and clear guidance and they did so to commit excesses against each other. So, by His authority

¹⁰ Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, p. 242.

¹¹ *Al-Qur'ān*, 2: 130.

¹² *Al-Qur'ān*, 2: 131.

¹³ *Al-Qur'ān*, 2: 132.

¹⁴ *Al-Qur'ān*, 2: 133.

Allah directed the believers to the Right Way in matters on which they disagreed. Allah guides whomsoever He wills onto a Straight Way¹⁵.

Whatever has been said by Allah SWT about the Messengers is also Truth. The Prophet Abraham [P.B.U.H.] was a Muslim. It is reconfirmed at another place in *al-Qur'ān*. See the follow statement of *al-Qur'ān*:

Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian; he was a Muslim, wholly devoted to God. And he certainly was not amongst those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity¹⁶. Surely the people who have the best claim to affiliation with Abraham are those who followed him [in the past], and presently this Prophet and those who believe in him¹⁷.

They say: “Be Jews,” or “Be Christians.” “Then you will be rightly guided,” Say to them: “No, follow exclusively the way of Abraham who was not one of those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity¹⁸”. Say: “We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the descendants [of Jacob] and in what was given to Moses and Jesus and in what the other Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are [Muslims] those who submit to Allah”¹⁹.

In the above *ayahts* it was made clear that the way of life which was followed by the Prophet Abraham [P.B.U.H.] was the same which was followed by all other Prophets [P.B.U.T.]. A few names of them are mentioned in *al-Qur'ān*. This declaration of *al-Qur'ān* also rejects the claims of pluralism, religious pluralism, and relativism. *Al-Qur'ān* rejects all other ways of life other than Islam as the correct and useful way of life for mankind. It also demonstrates that all the Prophets [P.B.U.T.] who were raised as the Messengers did not oppose each other like philosophers and thinkers but rather conformed to each other. They are identified in the *ayah* as *Muslimoon* [Muslims]. This also establishes the truth that the only universal way of life which was approved by Allah SWT for mankind is Islam. Allah SWT asked in *al-Qur'ān*: “Do they now seek a *Dīn* [new way of life] other than that prescribed by Allah and this despite all that is in the heavens and the earth is in submission to Him – willingly or unwillingly – and to Him all shall return?²⁰. From this point of view, Islam is neither the youngest religion nor religion as such. “And whose way of life could be better than that of he who submits his whole being to Allah²¹”. Whenever any revealed book was referred to, people who knew said, “We believe in it for it is the Truth from our Lord. Indeed, we were

¹⁵ Al-Qur'ān, 2: 213.

¹⁶ Al-Qur'ān, 3: 68.

¹⁷ Al-Qur'ān, 3: 67-68.

¹⁸ Al-Qur'ān, 2: 136.

¹⁹ Al-Qur'ān, 2: 135-136.

²⁰ Al-Qur'ān, 3: 83.

²¹ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 125.

already Muslims²²”. This *ayah* explicitly highlights that Islam is not the name of any religion. Even the term Muslim does not denote only those who follow the Prophet Muhammad [P.B.U.H.]. Rather, all the Prophets [P.B.U.T.] and their followers were Muslims. The term Muslim is applicable to the followers of all the Prophets [P.B.U.T.] as they all followed and practiced and preached Islam. Look at the following statements of *al-Qur’ān*:

The people of the Book adopted many ways rather than follow the True Way of Islam even after the knowledge of Truth had reached them, and this merely to commit excesses against one another²³.

And ask the People of the Book as well as those who follow no heavenly Book: “Have you also submitted [to Allah]?” If they have submitted to Him, they are indeed on the Right Way; but if they turn away from submitting to Allah, then your duty is merely to deliver the Message. Allah observes the affairs of His servants²⁴.

The fact is that the truth and reality of life and the world are explained by Allah SWT. Man in this world is an alien. He does not know how to spend his life. Hence, Allah SWT taught him through the Prophets [P.B.U.T.] the most suitable way of life that is in line with his nature and suitable for his well-being. This was the reason that from the time of inception of life on earth, every Prophet [P.B.U.H.] conveyed the same message, same guidance, same truth, the same way of life – Islam and that all the Prophets [P.B.U.T.] had always been Muslims. This is also the fact that all people throughout the ages who accepted the message of Islam, who submitted to the guidance of Allah SWT, were Muslims. This is the reason that Allah SWT reminded to the mankind that if they want to know which way of life is correct and universal, they must refer to Him:

And then if they come to believe as you believe, they are under the right guidance; and if they turn away, then quite obviously they have merely fallen into opposition to the Truth. Allah will suffice you for protection against them. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing²⁵.

If people come to believe does not mean that they are becoming dogmatic. They do not follow myth and illusion but the revealed Book. They are the people who have knowledge and understand the truth who always refer to the Book of Knowledge revealed by Allah SWT for understanding of anything. They are termed here in the above *ayah* as believers [who understand]. They are neither blind followers nor the victim of ignorance, speculation, and

²² Al-Qur’ān, 28: 53.

²³ Al-Qur’ān, 3: 19.

²⁴ Al-Qur’ān, 3: 20.

²⁵ Al-Qur’ān, 2: 137.

conjecture. They follow Knowledge and Truth granted to them through the process of revelation. There are number of *ayaths* which support the above claim:

Say [O Prophet]: “Will you then dispute with us concerning Allah when He is our Lord and your Lord? Our deeds are for ours and your deeds are for you. And it is Him that we serve exclusively.” Or do you claim that Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob and the descendants [of Jacob] were “Jews” or “Christians?” Say: “Who has greater knowledge, you or Allah?” Who does greater wrong than he who conceals a testimony he has received from Allah? Allah is not heedless of the things you do.²⁶

Say: “We believe in [the existence of Allah] Allah and what was revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and to Isaac and Jacob and his descendants, and the teachings which Allah gave to Moses and Jesus and to other Prophets. We make no distinction between any of them; and to Him do we submit²⁷”. In the *ayah* the Arabic word *Muslimoon* is used. “And whosoever seeks a way other than this way of submission – Islam – will find that it will not be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Life to Come²⁸”. Earlier to this it was said: “Recall when Allah took a covenant from the Prophets: “This is the Book and the Wisdom which I have granted you. But should a Prophet [P.B.U.H.] come to you confirming what you already possess, you shall believe [understand] in him and shall help him²⁹”. This means that all Prophets [P.B.U.T.] had been asked to pledge- and the pledge of a Prophet [P.B.U.H.] is automatically binding upon his followers- that they would support every Prophet [P.B.U.H.] that God sent to preach and establish His Din, for the cause for which they had been raised. It is useful to point out that the Prophets [P.B.U.T.] before Prophet Muhammad [P.B.U.H.] had to take this pledge, and therefore every Prophet [P.B.U.H.] announced to his followers the coming of other Prophets [P.B.U.T.] in the future and directed them to support those Prophets [P.B.U.T.] whenever they appeared. It seems significant that there is no mention, either in *al-Qur’ān* or in the *Hadith*, that the Prophet Muhammad [P.B.U.H.] was asked to take such a pledge. Moreover, the Prophet [P.B.U.H.] neither informed his followers of the advent of any future prophet nor did he direct them to believe in the prophethood of any such prophet. On the contrary, he has been pronounced *khatam al-Ambiya* [the seal of the Prophets [P.B.U.T.]], meaning the last of them. Several traditions from the Prophet Muhammad [P.B.U.H.] confirm that he categorically declared that no prophet would come after him.

²⁶ Al-Qur’ān, 2: 139-140.

²⁷ Al-Qur’ān, 3: 84.

²⁸ Al-Qur’ān, 3: 85.

²⁹ Al-Qur’ān, 3: 81.

So, saying, Allah asked: “Do you agree and accept to take up the burden of the covenant?” They answered: “We agree.” He said: “Then bear witness; and I will be with you among the witnesses³⁰. Then whosoever shall turn away from this covenant, they are the transgressors³¹”. Further it was said: “[O Muhammad], We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the Prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham, Ismael, Isaac, Jacob and the offspring of Jacob, and Jesus and Job, and Jonah, and Aaron and Solomon, and We gave to David Psalms³². We revealed to the Messengers We have already told you of, and to the Messengers We have not told you of; and to Moses Allah spoke directly”³³. These Messengers were sent as bearers of glad tidings and as warners so that after sending the Messengers people may have no plea against Allah. God’s purpose in raising the Prophets [P.B.U.T.] was to establish His argument against mankind. God did not want ignorance to have any basis on which to plead that their actions were done in unawareness, and that no arrangement had been made to guide man to the Truth.

Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise³⁴ [Whether people understand it or not] Allah bears witness that whatever He has revealed to you, He has revealed with His knowledge, and the angels bear witness to it too, though the witness of Allah is sufficient³⁵. Those who denied this Truth and barred others from the Way of Allah have indeed strayed far away³⁶. Likewise, Allah will neither forgive those who denied the Truth and took to wrong-doing, nor will He show them any other way³⁷ save that of Hell wherein they will abide. And that is easy for Allah³⁸.

The purpose of the revelation in the form of the Book was made clear. It is said: “This is a Book which We have revealed to you that you may bring forth mankind from every kind of darkness into light, and direct them, with the permission of their Lord, to the Way of the Mighty, the Innately Praiseworthy, [to the Way of] Allah to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth³⁹”. ... Allah SWT further declared: “This day I have perfected for you your *Dīn* [the way of life and the *Shariah*] and have bestowed upon you My Bounty in full measure and have been pleased to assign for you Islam as your

³⁰ Al-Qur’ān, 3: 81.

³¹ Al-Qur’ān, 3: 82.

³² Al-Qur’ān, 4: 163.

³³ Al-Qur’ān, 4: 164.

³⁴ Al-Qur’ān, 4: 165.

³⁵ Al-Qur’ān, 4: 166.

³⁶ Al-Qur’ān, 4: 167.

³⁷ Al-Qur’ān, 4: 168.

³⁸ Al-Qur’ān, 4: 169.

³⁹ Al-Qur’ān, 14: 1-2.

Dīn – the way of life”⁴⁰. The ‘perfection of *Dīn*’ mentioned in this *ayah* refers to making it a self-sufficient system of understanding of some basic truths and realities and conduct, and an order of social life providing its own answers to the questions with which man is confronted so that in no circumstance would one need to look for guidance to any extraneous source. The bounty referred to in the statement: “I have bestowed upon you My Bounty in full measure.” is the bounty of true guidance. The statement: “I have been pleased to assign for you Islam as your *Dīn*” means that since the Muslims had proved by their conduct and their striving that they were honest and sincere about the commitment they had made to Allah SWT in embracing Islam - the commitment to serve and obey Him - He had accepted their sincerity and created the conditions in which they were no longer yoked in bondage to anyone but Him. Thus, the Muslims were no longer prevented from living in submission to Allah SWT because of extraneous constraints just as there were no constraints preventing them from subscribing to true beliefs.

The Name Muslim Was Given by Allah SWT

One can see in *al-Qur’ān* that not only Islam, as the way of life was granted by Allah SWT even the name Muslim was also given to the Prophet Abraham [P.B.U.H.] by Allah SWT and to all those who came before and after him and submitted to Allah SWT.

Believers bow down and prostrate yourselves before Your Lord and obey [serve] Your Lord and do good that you may prosper⁴¹. Strive in the cause of Allah in a manner worthy of that striving. He has chosen you [for His task], and He has not laid upon you any hardship in *Dīn*. Keep to the faith of your father Abraham. Allah named you Muslims earlier and even in this [Book], that the Messenger may be a witness over you and that you may be witnesses over all mankind. So, establish Prayer, and pay *Zakah*, and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protector. What an excellent Protector; what an excellent Helper⁴².

Hence, it is logical to say that a Muslim follows Islam, and Islam means submission to Allah SWT through His guidance. This submission is conscious with sound understanding of Islam, life, and the world based on Knowledge granted by the Creator Allah SWT. Allah SWT is giving here witness that Abraham and Ismael were Muslims who wanted their progeny to be Muslim. See the following *ayah*:

Recall when ...Abraham and Ismael praying: “Our Lord! Make us [Muslim] submissive to You and make out of our descendants a community that

⁴⁰ Al-Qur’ān, 5: 3.

⁴¹ Al-Qur’ān, 22: 77.

⁴² *Ibid*.

submits [of Muslims] itself to You and show us the ways of Your service [obedience] and turn to us in mercy⁴³.

Further it was made clear that Allah SWT bestowed upon the Prophet Abraham [P.B.U.T.] and his offspring, the Prophet Ishaq [Issac] and Yaqub [Jacob] and each of them. He did guide them to the Right Way as Allah SWT had earlier guided the Prophet Noah [P.B.U.T.] to the Right Way, and of his descendants. Allah SWT guided the Prophet Daud [David] and the Prophet Sulayman [Solomon], the Prophet Ayyub [Job], the Prophet Yusuf [Joseph], the Prophet Musa [Moses] and the Prophet Harun [Aaron]. Thus, He rewarded those who did good⁴⁴. Allah SWT said: [And of his descendants We guided] Zakariya [Zechariah], Yahya [John], Isa [Jesus] and Ilyas [Elias]: each one of them was of the righteous⁴⁵. [And of his descendants We guided] Ismail [Ishmael], al-Yasa [Elisha], Yunus [Jonah], and Lut [Lot]. And each one of them We favored over all mankind⁴⁶. Likewise, We elected for Our cause and guided onto a Straight Way some of their forefathers and their offspring and their brethren⁴⁷. Abraham was on the self-same way [as Noah]⁴⁸. Through all these messages it was made clear that Islam is the only way of life which is suitable for mankind. It was made clear repeatedly in *al-Qur'ān*. Allah SWT said: “He has prescribed for you the Din [Right Way] which He enjoined upon Noah, and which was revealed to you [O Muhammad], and which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, commanding: Establish this Din [the way of life for the benefit of people] and do not split up regarding it...”⁴⁹.

Further, it was repeated: For it is We Who chose Abraham for Our mission in this world, and surely in the World to Come he shall be reckoned among the righteous⁵⁰. Such was Abraham that when his Lord said to him: “Submit,” he said: “I have submitted to the Lord of the Universe⁵¹”. And Abraham enjoined the same upon his children, and so did Jacob: “My children! Behold, Allah has chosen this Din [Right Way] for you. Remain till death in submission [to Allah]⁵². Why, were you witnesses when death came to Jacob? He asked his children: “Whom will you serve [obey] after me?” They said: “We shall serve [obey] Your God, the God of your forefathers, Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, the One God,

⁴³ Al-Qur'ān, 2: 127-128.

⁴⁴ Al-Qur'ān, 6: 84.

⁴⁵ Al-Qur'ān, 6:85.

⁴⁶ Al-Qur'ān, 6: 86.

⁴⁷ Al-Qur'ān, 6: 87.

⁴⁸ Al-Qur'ān, 37: 83.

⁴⁹ Al-Qur'ān, 42:13.

⁵⁰ Al-Qur'ān, 2: 130.

⁵¹ Al-Qur'ān, 2: 131.

⁵² Al-Qur'ān, 2: 132.

and unto Him do we submit⁵³”. From a careful reading of *al-Qur’ān* it becomes clear that Allah SWT did not present Islam as a dogmatic religion as understood in the contemporary world. It is presented beyond any doubt as the Right Way of life.

Islam As the Right Way of Life

Islam is always presented in *al-Qur’ān* as the Straight Way or the Right Way of life. The only Right Way for cultural, civilizational, and sustainable development from Allah SWT is Islam. If people follow Islam in its totality, it will guide and help them to achieve cultural, civilizational, and sustainable development. It is said in *al-Qur’ān* repeatedly. In the beginning of *al-Qur’ān* one can see several references to this truth and fact. We are taught to supplicate for Right Way:

Direct us on to the Straight Way, the way of those whom You have favored⁵⁴.

There are many places in *al-Qur’ān* wherein we have been reminded about the Right Way for the benefit of people, society, government, and state. Why does this reminder appear again and again in *al-Qur’ān*? It is made clear that for good and successful living in peace and harmony with prosperity and happiness we are in dire need of Allah’s guidance. It is also made clear that the East and the West; the heavens and the earth all belong to Allah SWT, and it is He Who guides whomsoever He wills onto the Straight Way. However, it does not mean that we do not need to work for this. We need to supplicate consciously and work for Right Way then only we will be guided to the Right Way⁵⁵. Allah SWT through the Right Way directs us in matters on which we may disagree with each other. “Allah guides whomsoever He wills onto a Straight Way⁵⁶”. At another place, it is said in *al-Qur’ān* that Allah SWT teaches us to the Right Way as He has full knowledge of everything⁵⁷. Allah SWT assured us: Whoever holds fast to Allah, will certainly be guided to the Straight Way⁵⁸. It is also clearly reminded that the Right Way stands distinctly from wrong ways. Now it is up to us to follow either the Right Way or the wrong. We are all at liberty. In all matters of life, we are free to choose any line of thinking and action. There is no compulsion: “The Right Way stands clearly distinguished from the Wrong”⁵⁹. Hence, Allah SWT guides

⁵³ Al-Qur’ān, 2: 130-133.

⁵⁴ Al-Qur’ān, 2: 142.

⁵⁵ Al-Qur’ān, 2: 150.

⁵⁶ Al-Qur’ān, 2: 213.

⁵⁷ Al-Qur’ān, 2: 282.

⁵⁸ Al-Qur’ān, 3: 101.

⁵⁹ Al-Qur’ān, 2: 255.

people who struggle for the Straight Way⁶⁰. Allah SWT does not direct the wrongdoers to the Right way. Allah SWT does not set the deniers of the Truth on the Right Way⁶¹ because He has made His Signs clear to everyone of us. Now it is for us to recognize what is right and what is wrong. If we fulfil this condition, then we are guided to the Right Way⁶² [3: 103]. What matters to us and needs to be accepted? The Truth and Reality of life and the world. There are still many people who do not understand the importance of the Truth and Reality of life and the Right Way as shown by Allah SWT. Due to their ignorance and arrogance, they do not take these matters seriously and follow the Right Way. They assume that they can think and design right way:

These are the ones who have purchased errors in exchange for guidance. This bargain has brought them no profit and certainly they are not on the Right Way⁶³.

Those who have refused to follow the Way of Allah resemble cattle; when the shepherd calls them, they hear nothing except shouting and crying; they are deaf, dumb, and blind, and so they understand nothing⁶⁴.

And whoever exchanges faith for unbelief has surely strayed from the Right Way⁶⁵.

Allah SWT cleared everything beyond any doubt and provided proof for the existence of both the Right Way and the Truth and Reality of life. It is declared in *al-Qur'ān*: O people! A proof has come to you from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a clear Light⁶⁶. Allah will surely admit those who understand Him and hold fast to Him to His mercy and bounty and will guide them on to a Straight Way to Himself⁶⁷. Further it was remarked that there has come a Light from Allah SWT, and a Clear Book through which Allah SWT shows, to all of us who seek to please Him, “the paths leading to safety. He brings them out, by His leave, from darkness to Light and directs them on to the Straight Way”⁶⁸. So, that we make our present and future safe “...take heed of your ultimate future and avoid incurring the wrath of Allah. Know well that one Day you shall face Him. Announce good tidings to the believers [people of understanding]⁶⁹”. Allah SWT warns us to beware of Him for to Allah SWT is the ultimate return⁷⁰. Allah SWT wants to make all this clear to us, and to guide us

⁶⁰ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 68.

⁶¹ Al-Qur'ān, 2: 264.

⁶² Al-Qur'ān, 1: 6.

⁶³ Al-Qur'ān, 2: 16.

⁶⁴ Al-Qur'ān, 2: 171.

⁶⁵ Al-Qur'ān, 2: 108.

⁶⁶ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 174.

⁶⁷ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 175.

⁶⁸ Al-Qur'ān, 5: 15-16.

⁶⁹ Al-Qur'ān, 2: 223.

⁷⁰ Al-Qur'ān, 3: 28.

to the right ways of doing things which the righteous have followed in the past⁷¹. Whatever Allah SWT has said is true then it is our responsibility to understand it and follow it sincerely with total devotion and consciousness⁷² but there are people who follow their lusts would like to drift us far away from the Right Way⁷³. Evil forces and Satan seek to make us drift far away from the Right Path⁷⁴.

Repeatedly, Allah SWT mentioned in *al-Qur'ān* about Islam as the Right Way, Straight Way, and Right Path: You are not responsible for setting these people on the Right Way; Allah sets on the Right Way whomsoever He wills⁷⁵; Say: “People of the Book! Why do you hinder believers from the Way of Allah, seeking that they follow a crooked way, even though you yourselves are witness to its being the Right Way?”⁷⁶; Have you not seen those to whom a portion of the Book was given? They purchased errors for themselves and wish that you too lose the Right Way?⁷⁷; Do you want to lead those to the Right Way whom Allah let go astray?⁷⁸; Whosoever of you disbelieves [fails to understand] thereafter has indeed gone astray from the Right Way⁷⁹.

Finally, Islam is also presented in *al-Qur'ān* as the Way of Allah SWT: Those who have faith [correct understanding based on true knowledge] fight in the Way of Allah⁸⁰; So, [O Messenger], fight in the Way of Allah⁸¹; Do not, therefore, take allies from them until they emigrate in the Way of Allah⁸²; Believers! [people of understanding] When you go forth in the Way of Allah, ascertain and distinguish...⁸³; ... are not the equals of those who strive in the Way of Allah with their possessions and their lives⁸⁴; He who emigrates in the Way of Allah will find in the earth enough room for refuge and plentiful resources. And he who goes forth from his house as a migrant in the Way of Allah and His Messenger, and whom death overtakes, his reward becomes incumbent on Allah⁸⁵; And whoever disbelieves in Allah, in His angels, in His Books, in His Messengers and in the Last Day, has indeed strayed

⁷¹ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 26.

⁷² Al-Qur'ān, 3: 95.

⁷³ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 27.

⁷⁴ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 60.

⁷⁵ Al-Qur'ān, 2: 272.

⁷⁶ Al-Qur'ān, 3: 99.

⁷⁷ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 44.

⁷⁸ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 88.

⁷⁹ Al-Qur'ān, 5: 12.

⁸⁰ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 76.

⁸¹ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 84.

⁸² Al-Qur'ān, 4: 89.

⁸³ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 94.

⁸⁴ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 95.

⁸⁵ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 100.

far away⁸⁶ Allah will neither forgive nor show the Right Way to those who believed, and then disbelieved, then believed, and again disbelieved, and thenceforth became ever more intense in their disbelief⁸⁷; ...for their barring many from the Way of Allah⁸⁸.

Conclusion

This article based on an exploration of *al-Qur'ān* has argued that Islam should not be taken merely as a religion. It is more than that. Why did Allah SWT identify and highlight about Islam as the Right Way? To make it clear and clear. Allah SWT said in *al-Qur'ān*: ... There has now come to you a Light from Allah, and a Clear Book through which Allah shows to all who seek to please Him the paths leading to safety. He brings them out, by His leave, from darkness to Light and directs them onto the Straight Way⁸⁹. At other places in *al-Qur'ān*, it was said that despite the powerful faculties of man, he is bound to follow the Right Path shown by Allah SWT for the betterment of people, society, and the entire humanity. The empirical realities of the world are witness to this fact of life. The race for the production and purchase of weapons by super and lower of the world demonstrates the truth revealed by Allah SWT that: Indeed, man is in total loss except those who have faith [correct understanding about Allah SWT and do righteous deeds and counsel each other to hold on to truth and counsel each other⁹⁰.

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⁸⁶ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 136.

⁸⁷ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 137.

⁸⁸ Al-Qur'ān, 4: 160.

⁸⁹ Al-Qur'ān, 5: 15-16.

⁹⁰ Al-Qur'ān, 103: 2-3.