

Recognising Other Faiths in Holy Qur'an

Introduction:

An important aspect of the topic was taking cognizance of the existence of both commonality and diversity widely spread out in all Faiths. This is generally common knowledge amongst all religious societies. However, what matters most are notwithstanding the bridging commonality or the steep diversity, but which provisions existed in different scriptures, which gave liberal opportunities to recognise the existence of other Faiths? Accordingly, how to live and practice one's own religion alongside other different Faiths? The feature of "Recognising Other Faiths" is the very core or heart of interfaith or multi-faith collective religious bodies, recently developed in so many countries.

Discussion:

1. We are given to understand from scientific evidence that the Universe is 13.8 billion years old. Earth is the only planet in our solar system, which has necessary facilities of oxygen and water for life support systems. Completion of Earth took 4.9 billion years and after reaching essential ambience of all their life-supporting climate systems, Almighty God created the first human, Adam. Importantly, Adam was also the first prophet over his descendants. There were over 124,000 prophets¹ as Almighty God's Messengers, located in various continents spread on Earth. **Muslims must recognise base origins of mankind from single pair of humans as Adam and Eve: HQ4:1** *"O people, keep your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind), and spread from these two, many men and women. And keep your duty to Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship. Surely Allah is ever a Watcher over you."*

¹ From names of Prophet Adam to Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*), a total of 124,000 prophets (*Nabi*) were appointed by Divine revelations, but directly delivered to them by Archangel Gabriel. Out of 124,000 prophets (as human beings), only 313 are Messengers (*Rasul*). Out of 313 Messengers, only 25 have been mentioned by name in the Holy Qur'an. Note that every Messenger (*Rasul*) is also a prophet, but every prophet (*Nabi*) is not a Messenger. The figure of 124,000 prophets is quoted in Hadith No 21257 of Musnad ibn Hanbal. Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) was the Last and Final Prophet and after his death in 632AD, that sealed off all prophets of any description whatsoever being appointed by Divine revelations, to serve humanity on earth. This is stated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ33:40** *"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets. And Allah is ever Knower of all things."*

2. All of 124,000 prophets had lots of commonalities in them insofar as belief in only One God and their worshipping only Him as the Almighty God. None of those 124,000 prophets ever practised worshipping in idolatry, polytheism and Trinity². However, after the deaths of those prophets, their next generation of followers took recourse to worshipping in idolatry, polytheism and Trinity. Accordingly, Muslims are permitted to eat food prepared by them and to take their women into proper formal marriage³, but not permitted to commit fornication. **Muslims are permitted to partake food prepared by previous revealed religions believing in One God⁴: HQ5:5** *“This day (all) good things are made lawful for you. And the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them⁵. And so are the chaste from among the believing women and the chaste from among those who have been given the Book before you,*

² (A) The concept of Trinity commenced in ancient Persia around 2000BC with Mithraism. According to various encyclopaedias on Mithraism, after Mithra was born he was visited by three wise men who presented the baby Mithra with special gifts. Mithra was “son of god, born out of his virgin mother” on 25th December (Winter solstice), lived to a grown up man, died and then rose from the dead 3 days later (in Spring equinox) and still lives up in the heavens to this day as the “light of the world.” Accordingly, Mithra would bring light over darkness. Before Mithra died, Mithra and his 12-disciples had the final supper. Mithraism was spread most widely within the ancient Persian Empire. Mithraism is a very widely discussed topic. Around 300BC, Mithraism had spread throughout both sides of the Mediterranean Sea and deeply imbedded into Rome. This was to the extent that Mithraism became the official State religion of the Government of Rome and throughout the Roman Empire and during the life of Jesus Christ.

(B) Consequently, thousands of years ago, many other regions where Mithraism had spread, the historical records of the religious leaders of those countries were also painted with descriptions matching with Mithraism.

(C) Early Christians during life of Jesus Christ believed in One God. Even after Jesus left the Middle East, his Christian followers continued to believe in One God. Trinity theory was introduced into Christianity in the 3rd Century AD in an interpretation by Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullian (b.155AD-d.242AD) of Carthage (northern Africa and now known as Tunisia), who was very well educated in Latin and Greek. Tertullian is recognised as the “father of the concept of Trinity in Christianity.” Trinity was first accepted at the 2nd Ecumenical Council and the 1st Council of Constantinople in **381AD**. Prior to that Christians believed and worshipped One God. Jesus Christ was the final Israelite prophet and he never preached or practised Trinity. There is no specific mentions of Trinity in the foundation Old Testament or the foundation Rabbinical Hebrew scriptures.

³ Formal marriage is taken to mean *Nikka*: *Nikka* is a formal marriage contract between a Muslim man and a Muslim woman.

⁴ They are: Jews, Christians, Sabeans (aka Sabians) and other Muslims. Their revealed Books are Torah, Injeel, Zabur and Holy Qur’an respectively (**HQ2:62, HQ5:69 and HQ22:17**).

⁵ This means for example, the Jews believe in One God and do not worship idols or any other substitute for Almighty God. Jews also do not make offerings to idols. Kosher when used in relation to foods, is a Hebrew terminology, which means “fit” to be eaten. Jews are forbidden consuming any form of pork. When Jews slaughter any animal, the animal is swiftly cut at its throat and bled to death, inasmuch as Muslims’ halal their meats. On the contrary, whatsoever foods principally forbidden to Muslims, regardless it was offered by Jews, remains forbidden and must not be eaten by Muslims.

when you give them their dowries, taking (them) in marriage⁶, not fornicating nor taking them for lovers in secret. And whoever denies faith, his work indeed is fruitless; and in the Hereafter he is among the losers.”

3. Islam, through its Divine revealed scripture, the Holy Qur'an, gives due recognition that all past prophets were Messengers and who all preached the same message: There is only One Almighty God, and Who has no partner or assistant of any description whatsoever. Distortions in the principles of Faith were wilfully introduced by their followers after the death of those prophets⁷. Whilst it is known in the Hadith that there were around 124,000 prophets since creation of this planet Earth, the Holy Qur'an mentions only 25 names of prophets. These 25 names have been linked with significant events, as lessons for humanity to learn from. The same names have also been stated in the previous Divine revealed scriptures, before the Divine revelation of the Holy Qur'an. This repetition of same names in the other previously revealed scriptures, brings about stylistic consistency in the principles and injunctions stipulated in the Holy Qur'an. In the main this refers to the Hebrew revealed scriptures in the TaNaKh⁸, Jesus Christ's revealed scripture of Injeel⁹ and Prophet David/King David's

⁶ Muslims are permitted to marry Jewesses or Jewish women but they must be treated in exactly the same equality as if getting married to Muslim women and the Jewesses must be given full rights to dowry as if marrying Muslim women. This is so because Jews are also believers and practitioners of believing and worshipping only One God and not believers in idolatry, polytheism and Trinity.

⁷ Mainstream ancient religions which existed as resultant from distortions were: Worship of Molech (ancient pre-Abrahamic) as the ancient god of child sacrifice, Baalism (pre-Exodus in Phoenicia), Mithraism (around 2000BC), Zoroastrianism (around 600BC) and Gnosticism (ancient Jewish and pre-Christian, around 100BC).

⁸ The *TaNaKh* is an acronym for original Jewish combined scriptures of *Torah*, *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim*. They are about Jewish Law, Prophets and Jewish Writings in that respective order, and they also form the canonical collection of Jewish texts. These Jewish scriptures also form the basic texts of the Christian Old Testament in structure format, but are written in ancient Hebrew texts. On the contrary, it may be stated that the English and other mainstream language versions of the Old Testament are really modified translations from the basic Hebrew texts. In addition, there are slight variations in numbering order of verses. The acronym *TaNaKh* is deciphered as follows: *Ta*= *Torah*: These are first five books of Prophet Moses, (also referred to as the Pentateuch) comprising English language names of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In the *Torah* however, they are with unique Jewish language names. *Na*= *Nevi'im*. The *Nevi'im* is the second main division between the *Torah* and the *Ketuvim* and the *Nevi'im* deals with all listed prophets within Judaism. The *Nevi'im* is divided into 24 books and is mainly poetical (e.g. Psalms and Proverbs). They are however, not one-on-one direct match with the Bible order of books. *Kh*= *Ketuvim*. The *Ketuvim* is divided into main 4 sections. It is also reflective of the Bible but also not one-on-one direct match with the Bible order of books.

⁹ *Injeel* (or spelt *Injil*) is the Arabic word for all Divine revelations to Jesus Christ (*as*). The *Injeel* was revealed to Jesus Christ (*as*) in a manner, not too different to what was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*). The Holy

revealed scripture of the Zabur¹⁰, building bridges of commonality as unity in diversity and recognising other Faiths. **Recognition of previously named prophets in the TaNaKh, Injeel, Zabur and the Qur'an¹¹ reflects as Recognising Other Faiths: HQ2:136** *“Say: We believe in Allah and (in) what has been revealed to us, and (in) what was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) what was given to Moses and Jesus, and (in) what was given to the prophets from their Lord, we make no distinction between any of them and to Him we submit.”*

4. There are consolidations of oneness in the verse, which follows next. The injunction in the Holy Qur'an implies the whole world to be a global village and the whole of mankind as a single nation. The entire spread of mankind descended from one couple, Adam and Eve. All prophets who descended downstream, believed and emphatically preached that one most important message about the absolute independence of One God: the Almighty God. Notwithstanding such strong propagations about One God, the followers of the past prophets differed and introduced variations, which led to practices of idolatry, polytheism and Trinity. The Holy Qur'an clarifies, that Almighty God still has opportunities open to those who wandered away in their faith, to return to believing in the Holy Qur'an. On the contrary, the Holy Qur'an compels Muslims to accept all others as people of a global village and all its people as common community. Then let their final decision of outcomes reside with Almighty God. **The Holy Qur'an also requires Muslims to accept all of humanity as creations of Almighty God: HQ2:213** *“Mankind is a single nation. So Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people in that in which they differed. And none but the very people who were given it differed about it after clear arguments had come to them,*

Qur'an makes 12 mentions of the *Injeel* within its texts of different Chapters. The four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are not Divine revealed deliveries but the work of four apostles and do not form part of the *Injeel*.

¹⁰ The *Zabur* refers to the scripture revealed to King David, who was also Prophet David (*as*). There is incorporation of the *Zabur* into the Bible under the caption of the Psalms. However, the Holy Qur'an makes only 3 mentions of the *Zabur*.

¹¹ Of course the Holy Qur'an is the Book authored by Almighty God and was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) over a period of 23 years, as the last and final of all revealed Holy Scriptures. Islam and Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) remain sealed as the last and final revealed religion and last and Final Prophet respectively, forever into the future. Refer to **HQ33:40** *“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets. And Allah is ever Knower of all things.”*

envying one another. So Allah has guided by His will those who believe to the truth about which they differed. And Allah guides whom He pleases to the right path.”

5. There were 124,000 prophets¹² since creation with the Final Prophet as Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*). In the very early stages of prophets, there were no books of religious Faiths as we have today. All past prophets received their revelations from Almighty God but delivered to them directly by Archangel Gabriel. These prophets had committed their revelations to their memory, which was passed downstream to subsequent descendants. The differences were not with the past prophets but with their subsequent followers who introduced distortions. **The Holy Qur’an compels Muslims not to distinct differences between any of the past prophets: HQ2:285** *“The Messenger¹³ believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. They all believe in Allah and His angels and His Books and His messengers. We make no distinction between any of His messengers. And they say: We hear and obey; our Lord, Your forgiveness (do we crave), and to You is the eventual course.”*
6. This issue of mankind being a single nation has already been discussed. The true revelations were delivered directly by Archangel Gabriel to be delivered to the prophets, and who in turn conveyed those revelations to their followership. Although distortions in beliefs and practises were introduced by those in followership, mankind remains as a single nation, the world over. **The Holy Qur’an states there is unity in diversity by considering all mankind as a single nation: HQ10:19** *“And (all) people are but a single nation, then they disagree. And if a word had not already gone forth from your Lord, the matter would have certainly been decided between them regarding that in which they disagree.”*
7. Once again, the variations and distortions in other Faiths were not prompted by their originating prophets, but by the downstream elements in their several centuries of followership. Consequently, those in the modern followership have been given to believe, that

¹² Please read Footnote 1. All past 124,000 prophets were human beings and all have died, never to return.

¹³ This refers to Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*). Please refer to Footnote 1.

whatever they believe are historically correct, but they are genuinely unaware of distortions. Insofar as their distorted beliefs and practises matter, they honestly think that they believe correctly and practise correctly. The final decision on their beliefs and practices reside with Almighty God and not people in society. **The Holy Qur'an compels Muslims not to abuse other Faiths: HQ6:108** *"And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides Allah, in case, exceeding the limits, they abuse Allah through ignorance. Thus to every people have We made their deeds seem good; then to their Lord is their return so He will inform them of what they did."*

Conclusions:

- a) Every Faith needs that space to exist and carry out its mission objectives, without fear of other religious groups hating or working schemes against it.
- b) Diversity of Faiths came about as the aggregate effect of progressive cultural changes in humanity, plus lack of scriptures as books, during the serving times of early prophets for the next generations of descendants as adherents.
- c) Hence, Recognising Other Faiths is not something to stress upon as that is already known to most peoples, but the stress is required to find how their scriptures compel their followership to respect and allow freedom of religious practices by all other religious and racial ethnicities.
- d) The final decision on their beliefs and practices reside with Almighty God and not just any people in wider society.
- e) Recognising Other Faiths becomes an important bridge to cross over the divide between so many different Faiths.

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