

Contribution of Non- Muslims to Islamic Studies: A Step of Invigoration for Interfaith Cordiality in India

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Abstract

Islam is one of the oldest religions of the world and its re-emergence in 7th Century C.E. through the Prophet Muhammad (*Sall Allahu Alyhi Wa Sallam*) instigated in people of different religions a concern for their religious protection and they couldn't accept the message of Islam in contradiction to their religious beliefs. Studies of Islam by non-Muslims began in very early years of Islam, when Muslims empire was expanding. Interaction and relation of Muslims with non-Muslims was not uncommon then, non-Muslims were denizens of Muslim empires. Being a multi-religious society, the clashes among religions is an obvious fact; crusades are an example of such clashes. The dissemination of Muslims and their belief led interest of non-Muslims to read and learn about the Muslim culture, creed and literature. As a matter of fact Islamic studies as a discipline is derived from the West and developed later in other parts of the world. Similarly, the interaction of Muslims in India is evident in history. Muslim rule in India lasted for a very long period and many Hindu people also began to study Islamic belief and its basic literature as a perspective of research. Contribution of Hindus to Islamic studies is, but very limited in comparison to the contribution from other parts of the world. However contribution to Islamic studies on their part is in different fields. This paper will bring forth the study of Islamic studies and contribution of non-Muslims to Islamic studies in India.

Keywords: *Cordiality, Islamic Studies, Interfaith Dialogue, Non-Muslim Contribution, Orientalism, Peace.*

Introduction

Islamic Studies is an academic discipline, it is a contemporary approach of studying Islam. Islamic Studies is an umbrella term and draws on a variety of fields that includes Islamic civilization, culture, religion, Islamic history, Islamic social sciences, Islamic scientific heritage, Islamic philosophy, Sufism, Comparative Religions, Interfaith Dialogue, Gender studies, Islamic Economics and Finance, Human Rights, Value Education and Ethics. With the tools of interdisciplinary and comparative approach it sheds light on the multiple expressions of Islam as a spiritual religion, the role of Islamic civilization in global history, and importance of Islamic discourses in the contemporary world. It examines the thought of the key Muslim intellectuals of medieval as

well as modern age and their attempts to come to the terms with modernity. The areas for consideration also include renewal and reform, the impact of colonialism and globalization on Muslim discourse, independent judgment (*Ijtihad*) versus emulation (*Taqlid*) and issues associated with the civil society.

Islamic Studies; an Overview

Although Islamic studies has established itself as a separate and independent subject of study in most parts of the world, it has not yet got proper and exact definition. The scholars of Islam and Islamic studies have been trying to give an exact definition and are yet in the process. Different scholars perceive and conceive it differently. This is the reason why different subject matter and scope is assigned to it by different scholars. As it appears from its construction of the words “Islamic studies”, it will mean “studies on Islam”. In other words whatever is related with Islam is included in Islamic studies. Therefore the scope and subject matter of Islamic studies will include each and every study, knowledge, information and science about Islam.ⁱ

Islamic studies; the term connotes different meanings to different people, different communities see it in various reflections, commonly the term is misunderstood. Islamic studies originated for the purpose of gaining or acquiring the knowledge, the knowledge of widely accepted, vigorously spreading and dominating religion. For this knowledge to be acquired for the purpose of revealing the secrets of its dominance, widespread and following it, the western scholars approached different methods and developed a methodology for studying Islam. Islamic studies thus became an academic discipline and an interesting subject for the nations of this world. Islamic studies is an analytical study of religion Islam, analysis done by any person whether Islamic or un-Islamic. It is the process of studying Islam and Islamic theories and accordingly giving response to these.

Practical needs a theory and without theory there is no practical in this world. Islamic studies provide a theory almost to the entire practical whether done or to be done in this world. It is not merely a social science subject, as it encompasses vast area of knowledge; knowledge that deals with different disciplines, different fields and different subjects. Islamic studies can be studied mainly in two contexts; Non-Muslim context and Muslim context.

Muslim context: Evidences of this can be traced from the times of Adam (*Alyhi Al Salam*), the knowledge of Islam was ongoing and it gradually developed and people made discoveries with due time and were nurtured and gave rise to different disciplines, which are present day seen individually. And the process was continuous till the time of Muhammad (*Sall Allahu Alyhi Wa Sallam*) and after him. Muhammad (*Sall Allahu Alyhi Wa Sallam*) in Qur'an is described as knowledge provider, orator, knowledge generator, educator and more importantly a role model to mankind. The Prophet not only provided theory but also practically implied it. Then after him pious caliphs struggled hard to spread this knowledge and its implementation. Islamic heritage bears number of educational institutes and also large number of scholars in different fields. Thus in Muslim context

all that what Islam is and has is Islamic studies but distinction with non Muslim context is that it constitutes the importance of faith. Faith and belief in one God –Allah.

Western/Non-Muslim context: According to western context Islamic studies is an Oriental study, the study of the occident, or the study of the East (Islam in particular). When Islam flourished from the East to the West it became the subject of concern for every other religion. They started to learn and read the Islamic literature as matter of research and examination and sometimes for giving a critical thought. It generally for them was the study of this very religion, a research on the theology, culture, civilization, thought, philosophy, historiography and much more.

Students in Islamic Studies are expected to develop both a comprehensive knowledge of Islamic intellectual history and religious thought, as well as mastery of a field of specialization and the requisite tools for critical scholarship on Islam. They are expected to demonstrate competence in Islamic religious history (focusing on the development of Islamic civilization, law, society and institutions in the period from the origins of Islam to 1500 CE); Islamic religious thought (focusing on Islamic philosophy, theology, *Sufism* and *Shi'ism*); Islamic scripture and tradition (focusing on the composition, redaction and interpretation of Qur'an and *Hadith*); and modern and contemporary Islam (focusing on 16th to 21st century developments in the Arab Middle East, the Turco-Iranian world, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa and, most recently, Europe and America).ⁱⁱ

Islamic Studies is a subject that originated from the West and was introduced and developed by the Western scholars (generally known as 'Orientalists', 'Arabists', and now also as 'Islamicists': i.e., "those who dedicate their passion in the academic study of Islam"). Orientalism, in other words, is the cumulative tradition of scholarly study of Islam and the peoples and cultures of Muslim lands. The western scholars like William Muir (1819-1905), Gustav Weil (1808-1889), Aloys Sprenger (1813-1893), Reinhart Dozy (1820-1883), Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921), Johann Fueck (1894-1974), David Marguolith (1858-1940), Josef Horowitz (1874-1931), R.A. Nicholson (1868-1945), Herald Motzki (b.1978), and Wael. B. Hallaq (b.1955) are the renowned figures in the world of Orientalism. In eighteenth century the fields of Oriental and Islamic Studies had become firmly established in major universities in Europe and North America: Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, London, Paris, Leiden, Berlin, Leipzig, St. Petersburg, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, McGill, Chicago, Georgetown, Los Angeles etc.

Islamic Studies in India

In India Islamic studies is taught as a social science subject in number of reputed central and state universities. Some of them are: Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), Jamia Hamdard (JH), Osmania University (OU), Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), University of Calicut (UC), and University of Kerala (UoK), University of Kashmir (KU), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), as a part of Religious Studies at Central University of Kashmir (CUK) and recently established as a

separate department in Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University (BGSBU) in Rajouri, Jammu and Kashmir. The aims and objectives of these universities are;

In AMU, Islamic Studies was introduced first in 1920, and later in March 1954, the Institute of Islamic Studies was established. In 1968-69, the Institute simultaneously began to function as the Department of Islamic Studies with the purpose “to promote the study of (a) Islamic Culture and Civilization (b) Social, Political, Economic and Cultural trends in the countries of West Asia and North Africa and (c) Modern Arabic, Persian and Turkish (Language and Literature)”. It is worthy to note that in AMU, besides the departments Arabic Language and Literature, there are many other Departments and Centers for the study of Islam (Islamic creed and beliefs) and Muslim world, viz. Department of (*Sunni & Shia*) Theology; Department of West Asian Studies; K. A. Nizami Centre for Qura’nic Studies (CQS); and (most recently established) Centre for South African and Brazilian Studies (CSBS).ⁱⁱⁱ

At JMI, the objective of Department of Islamic Studies is “to study the whole range of Islamic civilization and culture” with a special focus, beside the religion of Islam, on the “topics such as the socio-economic structure, military, administration, development of various sciences and thought, cultural life, cosmology, mysticism, literature and fine arts, and many other aspects of Islamic civilization”. At JH, the main thrust of research in the Department of Islamic Studies is “in the areas which have relevance to the problem faced by the contemporary Muslim world with special reference to the Indian Muslims; Issues related to misunderstanding about Islam and Muslims;...; Development and appraisal of Madrasa Education, Tasawwuf and its impact”.^{iv}

The Department of Islamic Studies, at the OU, was established in 1965, with the major objective of imparting “basic knowledge about Islam and Muslim societies in different regions” and seeking “to encourage interaction of different scholarly disciplines and to facilitate critical awareness of issues of religion and society promoting thereby good community relations and removing mutual distrust between members of a pluralistic society”.^v

In MANUU (established in 1998), which has a campus/ Regional Center in Kashmir too, the Department of Islamic Studies was established (May 2012) with the main objective “to offer courses in Islamic studies in modern perspective”. This was in view of the fact that in the present times, “Islam has taken a central stage ... and has a vast history of its rich civilization and culture pertaining to India and the world as a whole”. The department, in this context, offers “different courses of study and research in the vast areas of Islamic sciences, culture, civilization, mysticism and thought with the aim to train scholars in the subject of Islamic studies”. On the similar lines, the major purpose of the ‘Chair for Islamic Studies and Research’, at the UC established in 1988, is to conduct “advanced studies and interdisciplinary research on social, political, cultural, and intellectual trends and movements in contemporary Muslim societies” and to promote “a better understanding of Muslims with an objective of fostering communal harmony and pluralism in the region”.^{vi}

Non-Muslim Contribution to Islamic Studies in India

Non-Muslims in India have shown a good interest in contribution to Islamic studies and this contribution is a good source of developing cordial relations among Muslims and Hindus. This interest is evident since the advent of Islam in India. 16th and 17th centuries in India are remembered as miserable, feudalistic and imperial suppression led them towards struggle for their independence and in these years, from Indian lands emerged various thinkers and reformists whether Muslim or non-Muslim they cumulatively struggled for independence. The society at that time was pluralistic; there lived Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians etc. they were analyzing each other and this gave boost to their research in Islam as it was the dominating religion. They diversified their thoughts in order to help their society. Some of the renowned thinkers who took Islam in consideration and contributed to the field are discussed below;

The efforts of Ramananda (d. 1410) were combination of thoughts from his religion and Islam; he was influenced by Islam and worked on the unity among people instead of appreciating the rigid sectarianism in Hinduism. Dr. Y.P Singh writes; Ramananda was influenced by Islam is not certain but his willingness to admit men of all castes, including Islam, as his disciples, suggests the possibility of this. The right conclusion seems to be that Kabir was a Muslim *sufi* who, having come under Ramananda's influence, accepted some Hindu ideas and tried to reconcile Hinduism and Islam.^{vii} Similarly Guru Nanak (1469-1539) opposed Hindu-Muslim rivalry and he is the second great religious leader whose work shows undoubted Islamic influence. The Sikh religion, of which Nanak was the founder, is noted for its militant opposition to Islam, but this is largely a product of historical circumstances in the seventeenth century. Nanak's own aim was to unite both Hindu and Muslim through an appeal to what he considered the great central truths of both. He acknowledged Kabir as his spiritual teacher, and their teachings were very similar.^{viii} Thus their attempt was to bridge a gap between Hindus and Muslims. Interfaith cordiality is one of the important traits of Islam.

Hindus used to print Arabic, Persian and Urdu books of different subjects. Of them, Munshi Nawal Kishore (1836-1895) was the most famous. Jamia Millia Islamia's Department of Urdu organized Munshi Nawal Kishore Memorial Lecture on 20 December in which Prof. Shah Abdus Salam, OSD of Rampur's Raza Library said that in view of his (Nawal Kishore) overall services and his cultural achievements, he should be considered more as a dynamic and epoch making cultural leader of Indian renaissance rather than a great printer and publisher. Prof. Abdus Salam further says that Munshi Nawal Kishore founded and promoted Indo-Islamic culture through his own press. From linguistic point of view also he gave his large scale publication plan such universal and comprehensive shape which is rather difficult to find anywhere else. In addition to Urdu, Arabic and Persian literature, the sincerity and boldness with which he published Qur'an, *Ahadith*, books on Islamic jurisprudence, exegesis, theology and Islamic sciences and philosophy are examples of his learning, large

heartedness and magnanimity which cannot be forgotten for centuries. Prof. Shah Abdus Salam further said that he (Nawal Kishore) played extra-ordinary role in broadening mental and intellectual outlook and understanding of common people of India and that is why he published books on different topics of literature, culture and civilization. He played vital role in protecting intellectual and cultural heritage in India after 1857 through his press. So far no one has been able to equal, not to talk of surpassing, the epoch-making role he played in preserving and promoting Arabic, exegetic writings, jurisprudence and *fatwas*, dictionaries, books on Persian language and literature, translations from Sanskrit works and scriptures into Urdu, stories and legends and promotion of Urdu journalism in the form of Awadh Newspaper through his press.^{ix}

Malik Ram (1906-1993) is one of the well-known scholars who have worked on different aspects of Islamic studies, he has worked on gender studies and poetry in Islam, he is known Persian Arabic and Urdu scholar. His main theme and interest was Ghalib, on the subject he wrote '*Talmaza-e-Ghalib*', '*Ayare Ghalib*' (1969), '*Fasan-e-Ghalib*' (1997), '*Guftaar-e-Ghalib*' (1985). He has also written '*Awrat aur Islami Ta'lim*' published by United India Press, Lucknow in 1951, translated into English - '*Women in Islam*' in which he displays the status and position of women in Islamic culture and law. Malik Ram's another book that comes in handy when one is looking for some authentic information about some writers is '*Tazkira-i-muasreen*'. The book, originally a collection of articles written as obituaries and published in four volumes, has just been published in one volume by Rawalpindi's Al-Fath Publications. The original four volumes narrated the lives of Urdu's prominent writers who died between 1967 and 1977.

The first attempt to translate Qur'an in Telugu was made by Dr. Chilkoori Narayana Rao (1890-1952), lecturer in linguistics at Government College in Ananthpur. He started the work in 1915 and completed it in 1930. His translation made a considerable impact on Telugu speaking Muslims as well as non-Muslims. In the introduction Rao indicates why, when and how he undertook the translation. Being himself a Hindu, he had felt the need to work in cooperation with Muslim Scholars.^x The work is thus a great contribution to the Muslim world. There are number of other non-Muslim Indian scholars who have worked on the different topics discussed in Qur'an; unity of Allah, rebirth, transcendence and many more. Non-Muslim contact with Muslims in India led them to study the different themes present in Qur'an. They were not only influenced with the message of Qur'an but also made attempts clear confusions and misconceptions regarding various Qur'anic statements. They interestingly wrote translations of Qur'an in various Indian languages, research articles, seminar papers and even books on the Qur'an.

Mangal A. Buch has discussed the idea of God's attributes of omnipresence and in-corporeality in very clear words. He has grasped the exact sense of the Qur'an. He says, "Another great service rendered by Islam to the cause of pure Faith, is the emphasis placed upon the spiritual nature of the Highest Good. The essential nature of God was His spirituality. Islam cannot believe in a God with Hands and Feet. It was a protest against blind

polytheism on the one hand and blind anthropomorphism on the other hand. The result is not a materialistic monoism, but a spiritual monoism. The Supreme Being is partly imminent and partly transcendent; His presence can be traced in the beauty and magnificence of nature, in the events of History, in the personal experience of every Human Being, in all things great and small. Yet, He is not coterminous with the created universe like the God of Pantheists, but transcends the empirical of time, space, and causality.”^{xi}

Baba Govind Das says about the Qur’an; “Qur’an is the only sacred book and scripture of Islam. It is a collection of divine utterances of the Prophet. Its authorized text was compiled from verses gathered either from bone inscriptions and palm leaves or from the breasts of men. The eternity of its truth, the purity of doctrines, the poetry of its verses, the fullness of its details, and its succinct self sufficiency is a bliss to the believer, saving grace of the sinner, a hard hit on the heart of the infidel, an object lesson to the agnostic, and didactic death to infidelity. It is believed to have been compiled during the life time of the Prophet. It is a book of all times. It is a book of the past, the present and the future with their respective implications of the condonation of sin, conscientiousness of belief and the consummation of the promise of the kingdom of heaven.”^{xii}

Dr. V. Mohan has presented a detailed survey on “*Islam in Sri Lanka*”, developed from different works of early scholars. He has discussed the whole history of emergence of Islam in Sri Lanka, different phases of Islamic history. He has given the statistical data of increasing Muslim population. He thoroughly has studied the societal, economic and educational status of Muslims in Sri Lanka and has presented the detailed account. ^{xiii}

Prof. K.S Ramakrishna Rao (b.1932) has written a booklet on the life of a prophet of Islam, “*Muhammad, The Prophet of Islam*”. The main focus of author is on the marvelous character of Muhammad (*Sall Allahu Alyhi Wa Sallam*). This booklet with 32 pages is divided in six parts these six parts of booklet are six chapters which reveal the different aspects of the life of Muhammad (*Sall Allahu Alyhi Wa Sallam*) to the reader. ^{xiv}

There are number of non-Muslim scholars who had worked on Islamic history, Qur’an, *Tafsir*, *Hadith*, *Sirah* and *Fiqh*. The contribution of non-Muslims is an important step of conciliation among people within a nation of diverse faiths.

Indian Contribution to Interfaith Dialogue

Non-Muslim interest in Islam has already opened a door for reconciliation among people belonging to various faiths, there are more efforts led by Muslims and non-Muslims together to develop cordial relations and to promote a brotherly environment in India and also in other parts of the world. Dialogue is unavoidable in the contemporary world because the world is like a village, everything is near and close to be influenced with and examine to. Dialogue makes people to understand each other’s view point and a society of peace and prosperity finds its way to exist. Dialogue is now not limited to some specific areas but have developed and grown inter-religious contacts. Access through media and telecommunication is unavoidable; through it common masses get aware with the world and all world religions. Globalization has opened doors for common man and he can

access to the every part of world. Adherents of different faiths also cannot ignore each other in such a globalized atmosphere. Despite the unfinished current conflicts and violence, there are many Muslims living with non-Muslims in peace and cooperation. Many such stories are ignored and only the flashes of violence and hatred are focused and brandished. Interfaith dialogues are perfect settings not only for nurturing such positive and constructive Muslim and non-Muslim relations, but also for spreading them abroad and for allowing such relationships to be the guiding model for interaction.

Support for interfaith dialogue is evident in different countries like America, Africa, Saudi Arabia, and India and across the world. India too is supporting for interfaith dialogue. Many lectures and seminars and debates and conferences were/are held by different individuals and non-governmental organizations. Scholars of different faiths organize different faiths organize interfaith dialogues and participate in them. Samvada a voluntary organization has conducted many seminars and conferences related with interfaith dialogue and the proceedings of these seminars and conferences have been published. The third all India seminar was held under auspices of samvada during March 17-19, 2006, at Navsadhana, Varanasi on the topic '*The place of reason and faith in Religion*'.^{xv} The fifth All India seminar was held under the auspices of Samvads during January 29-31, 2007 at Andhra Kumbha Mela, Prayag on the topic "The Concept of the 'Other' in Religion."^{xvi} Similarly sixth All India Seminar was held under the auspices of Samvada in Banaras, Varanasi, 24-26th February, 2008, on the topic, 'Relevance of Religions in the Contemporary Age'.^{xvii} Scholars of different faiths participated in these seminars and presented their views and understandings on the said topics. Among the other Muslim scholars who presented their papers some prominent are: Abdul Ali, Prof, Dept. Of Islamic Studies, AMU, Aligarh, I.H. Azad Faruqui, Prof, Dept. Of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, Dr. Muhammad Ishaque, Prof, Dept. Of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, Abdul Qadir Jafari, prof. and Head, Dept. of Arabic and Persian, University of Allahabad, Allahabad, M. Maruf Shah, BVSc, Kashmir, Dr. Razi Ahmed Kamal, Prof. Dept. Of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, and Dr. Abdul Hamid Naumani, *Jamiatul Ulama-i-Hind*.

An international conference on interfaith dialogue was held on the topic '*Towards Human Understanding Through Dialogue*' on October 24-26, 2008 at India Islamic Cultural Centre, New Delhi. The conference was jointly organized by: Institute of Objective Studies, IOS centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies, and Universal Peace Foundation, New Delhi.^{xviii} furthermore, Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi, organized a Lecture on November 6, 2009 at their lecture Hall on topic '*Interfaith Dialogue: Issues and Challenges*'. Dr. Abdullah Siddique, Senior Research Fellow, Islamic Foundation Leister, U.K. was the Speaker.^{xix}

On 24th and 25th March 2007, Iran Culture House, New Delhi organized an International Seminar at India Habitat Centre on the Topic '*Dialogue Among Islam and Hinduism*.' Many scholars presented their views on the said topic. Thus a healthy dialogue took place.^{xx} Similarly, Centre for the study of Comparative Religions

and civilization, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi and Faculty of Religious studies, McGill University, Canada jointly organized 'Global Congress on world's Religions, After September 11- An Asian Perspective.' Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi had the honor of hosting this historical event. Scholars of different religious traditions and participants from different parts of the world encouraged the organizers by being present in this event. The event took place from 17-19 January 2009.^{xxi}

Moreover, on 20-21 of Feb. 2010 an International conference was hosted by Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. The conference was held under the title, 'International Dialogue between Islam and Oriental Religions.' The conference was jointly organized by many Muslim organizations and Institutes namely: World Union of Muslim Scholars, All India Muslim Personal Law Board, All India Muslim *Majlis-e- Mushawarat*, *Jamaat-e-Islamia Hind*, *Jamiat-e- Ulama-e-Hind*, *Markazi Jamat Ahl-e-Hadith*, *Islamic Fiqh Academy*, *Imarat-e-Sharia*, Bihar and Orissa, Zakir Hussain Institute of Islamic Studies, Interfaith Coalition for Peace and the Milli Gazette. The presence of internationally reputed scholars and religious figures made the event a success. Among whom the worthy to be mentioned are: Prof. Akhtarul Wassey, (Delhi, India), Prof. Hamid Naseem Rafiabadi (Kashmir), Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan (Delhi, India), Prof. Ali al-Quradaghi (Qatar), Jagatguru Onkaranad Saraswati of Pragma peeth, Dr. Ibrahim an-Naimi (Qatar), Maulana Abdullah Saud (Banaras, India), Shri Jugat Kishore Shastri (Ayodhya, India), Swami Lakshmi Shankar Acharya, Prof. M. D Nalapat, (Manipal, India), Mrs. Sheela Karina (Pakistan), Syed Ali Shah Gilani (Kashmir), Prof. Shafiq Ahmed Nadvi (Delhi, India), and Dr. Muied uz Zafar (Kashmir). The papers were presented by scholars and religious figures of Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, and the event was attended by adherents of different faiths. At the end of the conference a resolution was unanimously passed.^{xxii}

Dr. M M Verma taught at Delhi University (1962-95), he is gifted with understanding the complexity of international relations and how best to harmonize in such an endeavor. He has founded the Centre for UN Studies in 1989 (a Regd. NGO) and Subsequently Interfaith Foundation, India in 2005 (Regd. Under Trust Act). Many seminars, conferences and colloquiums are held by these organizations. A colloquium held in 2004, 1 March and the topic was '*Unity, Peace and Brotherhood: An Interfaith Dialogue*'. In Jamia Millai Islamia Department of Islamic Studies and Interfaith Foundation in combine has organized a colloquium on '*Interfaith Dialogue: Towards a Better Society*' 31 October 2013. One day National Conference organized by Gelug International Foundation, on '*Interfaith Paradigm for World Peace Harmony and Brotherhood*' at Theatre Hall, India Habitat Centre, Lodi Road, New Delhi, March 2016, on the occasion of the 80th Birth anniversary of Dalai Lama. Prof. M M Verma as interfaith advisor of Gelug International Foundation and chair of the session. Similarly there are various events which are organized by Interfaith Foundation and also it has given support to other organizations and institutions.^{xxiii}

The result of interfaith dialogue is neither visible nor penetrative because it is a cloistered activity carried on by the elitists of different religious groups and those elitists have no (or less) influence at the grassroots levels. The UNO is a truly representative body of the nation-states of the world and its schemes have a fair chance of being implemented through governments. According to M. Abdul Haq Ansari:

We should welcome the dialogue provided it is aimed at the end for solving the common problems faced by both communities, Muslims and Christians [or, for that matter, by the followers of different religious traditions]. The exercise may be useful for resolving misunderstandings emanating from misinformation. However, the purpose of any such dialogue should be ascertained before engaging in the exercise. One cannot decide about participation in any dialogue before knowing its intent and content and without understanding the objects that are to be achieved.^{xxiv}

It is important that when there are meeting-points or commonalities among the people they need to be promoted and augmented. This is in the best interests of humanity. The Qur'an explicitly directs that the people of earlier revelations be told to come and join what is commonly held by Muslims and them.

Say: "O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than Allah." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (Bowing to Allah's Will)."^{xxv}

This verse depicts that meeting on common points can bring forth truth and especially can build peace and harmony. It is common for all of the religions in this world, Muslims have to follow the guidance of Qur'an and remain sincere to their efforts towards different religions of the world. India is amalgamation of diverse faiths and is not so far from understanding of dialogue; to develop interfaith dialogue in India can help in promotion of prosperity of this nation and people of this nation.

Conclusion

India is a multi-religious, multi-cultural country, it is embodiment of different thoughts and minds. Man can never live in isolation and in such an environment people need to know each other and remain tied together in one way or other. These interfaith relations develop intellectual understanding and make people to work, think and judge rationally. Interfaith dialogue is a basic and important tool for bringing peace among religions, creating bonds and building bridge effort for tolerance and peaceful living. Research on opponent is a better way for understanding the reasons of gap. When people analyze and examine, they come to a conclusion which helps to bring truth forward. Promoting interfaith dialogue in this way can help in promoting peace and harmony. Dialogue is a must today, and the first step in establishing it is forgetting the past, ignoring polemical arguments, and giving precedence to common points, which far outnumber polemical ones. It is essential that

participants in a dialogue are thoroughly familiar with their own religious traditions. Secondly, the aim must be to acquire as much knowledge about the religion of the other as possible. In this way dialogue can be helpful in increasing knowledge and trust, and on the basis of commonalities and differences we can frame joint efforts to address the pressing global challenges of the new millennium. Globalization follows the principle of humanity and humanity is in contrary to the superiority of any religion over other. The ideal of equality wide-spread in current era does not promote discrimination on the basis religion, caste or color, and the only way to keep ourselves nurturing with the conceits of humanity, peace, equality, brotherhood/cooperation and non-violence is, that we look into our core ethics and find points of commonality and then join hands with each other so that we can develop cordial relations and bring peace to the world which can also help in overcoming crisis and difficulties. Religion being a sensitive point affects each and every person whether he is a student, teacher, politician, worker, peasant or a simply an idle sitting in his home. Religious disturbance keeps haunting every person and leaves a deep effect on his mind; it is attached to the feelings and emotions of a person, a human never remains neglected from this. So to bring religious peace is duty of every being especially of scholars who play an important role in bringing forth the diverse views and thoughts. And dialogue in this concern is a most powerful way of promoting religious peace and harmony.

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