



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
(DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES)

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Most Respected Sir,

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mumtaz Ali,
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Assalam-o-Alaikum

Subject: Invitation letter as Guest speaker in an international webinar

Hope you are fine. We would like to feel uttermost pleasure to invite you as a guest speaker for an international academic webinar. Basically, the Department of Islamic studies, Faculty of Social sciences, NUML has started a series of Islamic lectures on important academic issues. Actually, it is an attempt to offer viable solutions for ongoing issues and debates from primary sources of Islam with modern approach.

Seminars Details:

Topic: Muslim Tradition of the Study of Religion: Past, Present and Future
Day and Date: Saturday, 16th January, 2021
Time: 03:00 to 5:00 PM (Pakistan Standard Time)
Link: meet.google.com/hqj-gbfe-hea

We hope you will grant your precious time and the audience will take benefit from your vast knowledge and academic expertise.

Kind Regards
Dr. Noor Hayat Khan
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Respected Participants, brothers and sisters

Assalamu Alaikum

Thanks to Allah SWT and organizers for thir invitation.

MUSLIM TRADITIONS OF STUDY OF RELIGION: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

INTRODUCTION

In Sociology of religion there is a debate that the secular agenda has lost its credibility. Secularism has failed to manage religion.

Hence, they say religion has come back again. There is a wave of religious revival.

Many people are taking interest in religion. Religion is ready to play BIG political role once again, they argue.

In this context this webinar is important.

The organizers want to help people to understand the Muslim perspective of the study of religions so that they can plan the better process of development.

MUSLIM TRADITION

What is this Muslim tradition?

What is the basis of Muslim tradition of scholarship?

Is it based on Islam or any other paradigm?

What is Islam?

Is Islam youngest religion among the living religions of the world?

We need to raise these questions for a fresh understanding as there exists a lot of misperceptions about Islam and Muslim and their tradition of scholarship.

MY FIRST SUBMISSION IS THAT ISLAM IS NOT A RELIGION IN A LIMITED SENSE

It is not a departmental affair; it is neither mere thought, nor mere feeling, nor mere action; it is an expression of the whole man. It is not new. It is universal. It plays the central role in the scheme of life and society.

WHAT IS THE TRUTH ABOUT ISLAM?

It is introduced in the Quran by the Creator of the universe as al-Din which stands for

the world view and

the way of life.

It is code of conduct and law –

scheme of life and society –

source of culture and civilization

whose goal is to achieve Comprehensive, Holistic, and Sustainable Development in time and space context and success here in this world and in the Next world.

ISLAM: ITS BEGINNING AND ITS PLACE

Islam was not revealed FIRST time in 7th Century but begins with the life of humankind on earth.

Islam began with the Prophet Adam [pbuh] and his progeny. It is not the product of history in a specific historical period.

It is not the product of any human mind.

Islam is not founded by any human being. It is revealed to humankind from the Creator Allah SWT for the guidance of humanity.

Islam enjoys the central role in the scheme of life and society.

The name Islam and Muslim were not given by any human beings. They have been given by the Creator Allah SWT

Believers ...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 Din. 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 Helper. [22: 77]

Allah SWT is giving here witness that Abraham and Ismael were Muslims who wanted their progeny to be Muslim. See the following *ayah*:

...Abraham and Ismael praying: Our Lord! Make us Muslim [submissive to You] and make out of our descendants a community [of Muslims] that submits itself to You and show us the ways of Your service [obedience] and turn to us in mercy. [2: 127-128]

The Prophet Abraham was a Muslim. It is reconfirmed at another place in the Quran. See the follow statement of the Quran:

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 Power [Divinity] [3: 68].

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 those who submit to Allah” [2: 136].

In the above *ayahs* it was made clear that the world view and the system of life which was followed by the Prophet Abraham was the same which was followed by all other Prophets [pbut].

Say: “We believe in 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 submit.” [3: 83-84]

THE NATURE OF MUSLIM AND ISLAMIC TRADITION OF SCHOLARSHIP:

It is not a religious tradition

It is scientific and rational

It is civilizational and developmental

The basis of which is knowledge – true, authentic, and universal knowledge [TAUK] generally known as Islamic Revealed Knowledge [IRK], it is universal

Muslims were motivated by this body of knowledge to study scientifically and rationally each and every thing of both the worlds, physical and metaphysical. So they study every community and religion.

MUSLIM PIONEERS OF THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS WERE MAINLY INSPIRED BY THE TAUUK – Islamic Revealed Knowledge

- 1. We find a number of great scholars who study religions scientifically and rationally such as Al-Tabari, Al- Balqilani, Shahrastani, Ibn Taymiyah, Imam Al-Ghazzali, Ibn Nadim, Ibn Hazam, Al-Biruni etc.**
- 2. They applied scientific and objective approaches to be accurate on the study of religions.**
- 3. They adopted the methods of comparison, systematic analysis, and empirical observation of the then existing conditions, practices, beliefs, and customs and rituals of the followers of religions.**
- 4. They experienced them in societies.**
- 5. They always depended on Primary sources. They also benefited from secondary as well.**
- 6. They were interactive and observational in nature.**
- 7. They focus on logical and rational reasoning.**
- 8. They adopted descriptive, comparative, critical, analytical, the disputative, and polemical methods along with dialogues and debates**
- 9. But they focus on faith, doctrines such as concept of God, mode of worship. Some took the note of their economy and culture and the founders of religions.**

10. Their scope was limited, focusing on common issues

For example, al-Biruni followed scientific and rational methodology.

The FIRST principle which al-Biruni followed was the principle for passion for knowledge.

The SECOND principle of his methodology was to stick to the truth of a religion without distortion. Speak truth about that religion, find out the truth.

The THIRD principle was the principle of liberation from prejudice.

The FOURTH principle is liberation from self-conceived ideas and stolid attitude.

Later on in the so-called modern world anthropological, philosophical, sociological, psychological, and phenomenological approaches were developed.

But these approaches are not holistic. These methodologies are mainly reductionists in form.

Most of them emphasize on objectivity without following justice.

THE APPROACH OF THE TAUUK

Allah SWT commented in the Quran about pagans, polytheists, Jews, Christians, Zorastarians, and Ahl al Kitab, etc.

NOT AS RELIGIOUS GROUPS BUT AS THE UPHOLDERS OF A PARTICULAR WORLD VIEW AND THEIR SOURCES OF KNOWLEDHGE

In our time Ismail Raji al-Fauqi asked for objective, scientific, and rational approach to the study of religions focusing on ethical and moral dimensions.

NEED FOR A NEW APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

The objective of the study of religion is to know the Truth of this world.

The study of religions is not to find out the weakness of any religion.

One must follow a few principles as the part of the methodology of the study of religion or any ideology or isms:

- 1. Any study of anything of this world must be based on the knowledge of the truth and reality of life, society and the world.**
- 2. KNOWLEDGE must constitute the foundation of study, learning, and research which means knowledge should be the criteria.**
- 3. Knowledge as such must be true, authentic, and universal, tested and verified.**
- 4. Search for Truth and Reality of not only of religion or ideology but the entire universe. The truth and reality which remain permanent and universal. Free from time space context. Origin may be ONE but forms and content may be different.**
- 5. Whatever is true in terms of fact must be recognized because the truth is that some of the teachings may be common denial of which is unjust.**
- 6. Whatever is true must be distinguished from whatever is wrong.**
- 7. Justice must be maintained from beginning to the end.**

- 8. We must be able to see a religion in its original form. How it presents itself before us.**
- 9. As a principle one must identify the right kind of references, the original, not critical.**
- 10. The principle of comprehensive, holistic, moderate, and balanced approach to the study of religions.**
- 11. The principle of study the overall teachings as they are.**
- 12. The principle of development of man and society –what kind of man and society, system and sub-systems it develops.**
- 13. The principle of empirical, historical, and rational arguments and evidence are essential.**
- 14. The principle of comparative, critical and creative approaches.**
- 15. The principle of relevance and practicality.**

One should remember always that he has to achieve the success here and in the Hereafter.

And proclaim: “This is the Truth from your Lord. Now let him who will, understand [believe]; and let him who will, dispute [disbelieve]. We have prepared a Fire for the wrong-doers whose billowing folds encompass

them. If they ask for water, they will be served with a drink like dregs of oil that will scald their faces. How dreadful a drink, and how evil an abode! [18: 29].

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Based on a new style of presentation one must demonstrate creativity and innovation in our approach following the canons of ethical and scientific thinking along with empirical, historical, and rational evidence. We were always scientific and rational, we must achieve that status. There is no place in a scientific study, in its truest sense, for blind, dogmatic, superstitious, conjectural, and doctrinal approach. We should examine in a practical way which religion or ideology represents true, authentic, and universal world view and is capable in a holistic and comprehensive manner to guarantee the sustainable development free from crisis, chaos, and corruption leading to peace, harmony, prosperity and quality of life.

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