Ahlul Bayt's Manner of Confrontation with Ahl-e-Kitab

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Abstract: *familiarity with the attitude of Ahlul Bayt while confronting Ahl-e-Kitab, not only can introduce them a role model in management but also can help to comprehend various aspects of Islamic teachings. In the present article, by referring to Islamic resources and providing examples, the most important criteria of this issue is under study. These criteria show tendencies of Ahlul Bayt to have ethic-based, wise and scientific-based discussion, respect and kindness with Ahl-e-Kitab, justice-based and loyalty in treaties, preserving peace. These criteria had been manifested at the time of their rulership which they even manifested when they could find any opportunity even when they had no official power; i.e. these virtues are not essentially governmental.*

Keywords: *confrontation of Ahl Bayt with followers of Divine Faiths, Ahl-e-Kitab, Christianity, Jewism*

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Introduction

Holy Quran in addition to advising muslims to speak nicely with each other, emphasizes on taking proper approaches to confront Ahl-e-Kitab;[1] though, besides these emphasis, according to the same Quranic logic, accepting Wilayah of Koffar and Ahl-e-Kitab has been disapproved severely. The foundation of this attitude is traced back to their actions such as their declining truth or their opposition with Prophet or Muslims.[2] It means religious beliefs of Ahl-e-Kitab were not the reason of that order. In other words, Islam welcomes interactions with Ahl-e-Kitab or other believers in divine faiths like Christian and Jewish people.

Familiarity with the opinions of Ahlul Bayt in process of their interaction with Ahl-e-kitab, not only can introduce them as role models after Prophet, specifically from Islamic teachings, but also can help to comprehend various aspects of Islamic teachings. In this approach, each and every interactions between Ahl Bayt and followers of other religions which are derived from revelation and social and political life of Prophet, be studied in the realm of modern time and based on it; as an explicit interpretation includes rich teachings of Islam and opens a new horizon of understanding in the vast territory of Islam.

The significance of this issue absorbs concerns of some modern researches, and the difference of this article with other studies is the tradition-based attention of it to the type of this confrontation. While the other studies are usually based on Figh or they focused on a limited political, social, cultural or economical aspects.

Reviewing the collection of verses and traditions leads us to the point that this confrontation can be noticed from two main aspects:

Ethnicity

Doubtlessly, ethnicity is of the most significant behavioral must in Islam, as far as Quran introduces holy Prophet as a unique role model of morality.[3] To clarify an aspect in this regard, it teaches Muslims the way of facing Ahle-Kitab while addressing Prophet:

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

"And do not dispute with the People of the Book (Nazarenes) except in the best manner, except for those among them who do wrong and say (to them): 'We believe in that which was sent down to us and that which was sent down to you. Our God and your God is One, and to Him we have surrendered." (29:46)

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Therefore, the holy Prophet and his Ahlul Bayt treated Ahle-Kitab in the most suitable and polite way. For example, upon visiting Prophet, some Jews said "السام علیکم" instead of " السلام علیکم". The first one means "down with you or death falls upon you". They said this to bother Prophet. Prophet's wife sadly answered them, "death falls on you and God's Anger, and Curse." But the holy Prophet said, "Why are you swearing? Why are you angry and nervous?"[4]

In the history of Islam, there are various examples depicting the relationship between Islamic society and minorities, but the real Islamic example which is based on that Islam brought by Muhammad could be found in the behavior of Ali (a.s.) with religious minorities.

For example, Amirul Momenin Ali ordered his agents: "*lest you Muslims attack Jews and Christians under your rulership*."[5]

This shows the originality of morality-based relationship between Muslims and Ahle-Kitab in the opinion of imam of Muslims who is a person who learned Prophet's life style in correct way.

In another example, when a Christian, to belittle and make fun of imam Baqir, addressed him "بقر" (cow) instead of Baqir (باقر) (splitter of knowledge), imam with praiseworthy dignity, corrected his mistakes. In addition to these examples, in morality defined by Ahlul-Bayt, following some moral does and don'ts in social behavior could not be dropped by the excuse of religious differences or arguments. For example, imam while explaining the reason of his companionship with a non-muslim traveler on the way to Kufa, mentioned it as a sunnah in Prophet's life and said, "*this is of companion's right that an individual should see his co-traveler off respectfully and this is an order of Prophet."*[6]

Knowledge-oriented discussions

"Conversation" has a special place in explanation of divine faiths, it is used as an educating means; because by multifaceted explanation, mankind will find intellectual growth, and guidance will be realized. This feature, not only, at the time of inviting people to Islam, was regarded as a useful means, but also in Islam is emphasized as a base.

Therefore, conversation and interaction with Ahle-Kitab were one of the key issues for holy Prophet and Ahlul-Bayt. The order of being kind while facing Ahle-Kitab is derived from Quran, which says, "***Dispute with them in the best manner.***"(16:125)

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

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The legitimacy of conversation among religions and respecting their ideas and opinions and using suitable ways to interact with them is due to the fact that Islam has approved Divine books of Ahle-Kitab and says,

نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنْزَلَ التَّوْرَاةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ

مِنْ قَبْلُ هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ وَأَنْزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ

"He has sent down to you the Book with the truth, confirming what preceded it; and He has sent down the Torah and the Gospel (of Prophet Jesus which has been lost)

Before, as a guidance for people, and He sent down the Criterion. As for those who disbelieve in the verses of Allah, for them is an intense punishment. Allah is Mighty, Owner of Vengeance." (3: 3-4)

This shows that the gem of guidance, from Islamic point of view, is based on logical-based conversation and other means such as military actions are only allowed in rare cases; as the holy Prophet even gave priority to logical talk in battle field before war.

Prophet advised his companions: "*do not start fighting with disbelievers unless you invite them to have a discussion before*."[7] In addition, Prophet's advice to Ali upon sending him to Yaman is another obvious example, "*oh! Lest do not start war unless first you invite them to Islam, because if anyone is guided by you, is better than all things that sun spreads its light on it and night falls darkness on it."*[8] Likewise, Ali in his sermon named Ghase'ee "قاصعه" said in this regard, *"truly, God Almighty likes following Prophets and their books*."[9] This saying of him is compatible with those verses we have mentioned before[10] which necessitate respect to other beliefs and assert their rightness. Imam, by his words, not only respect all followers of divine faiths but also confirm their right to discuss their beliefs in the framework of reason and logic.

In another example, imam Sadiq has narrated from Prophet that, "*Prior to thinking about war, find a way to talk logically with other belief-holder*."[11]

Discussions of imam Riza and Ahle-Kitab which is explained in details in "Uyun Akhbar Riza" are of the most famous examples in this regard.[12]

The law of respect

From Islamic point of view especially Prophet's life style and Ahlul Bayt ethical code of behavior, all followers of Divine faiths in Islamic law and according to clear rules are respect-worthy and enjoy human dignity.

Therefore, there is no difference in the essence of respect between Muslims and

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non-Muslims and no one whether to be a governor or an ordinary person has no right to know him/herself superior to others and disrespect Ahle-Kitab or swear them; for example, in the story of Umme Hani, sister of Ali and her non-Muslim maid, when they referred to Ali, imam gave them both equal amount of Beitulmal بیت المال (Muslim treasury). This caused complaint of Umma Hani.[13] Or when a man from Ansar complained that why his right is equal to the right of his newly-freed slave, imam answered them, "*I recited Quran, but nowhere I have seen sons of Ismail are privileged in comparison to the sons of Ishaq, no difference even as small as] a wing of a mosquito*."[14] This depicts examples of interactional approaches by Ahlul-Bayt, which were based on respect and equality between Muslims and non-Muslims, Arab and non-Arabs, these approaches, even though were taken when Ali was a governor, were based on Quran. From Qurānic point of view there is no difference or superiority except for "Taqwa" تقوی (piety). In fact, the difference among Muslims is due to Taqwa. And it is a criterion to divide duties and a means to reach excellent aims of human beings, and not a cause of prejudice in terms of financial goals. As the holy Prophet said in his eternal chart in Hajjatul-Veda حجة الوداع (the last Hajj) that, "*oh people! Truly, God of you is the same and your father is the same; you are all from Adam, and Adam from soil. Truly! The most honored one of you before God is the most pious one of you and no Arab is superior to non-Arabs unless in terms of piety*."[15]

It is obvious that this saying includes Muslims and non-Muslims in general and not only Arab Muslims and non-Arab Muslims.

To assert this, we can refer to Quranic teachings which say all human beings from each race or tribe and with any financial or spiritual characteristics are created by the same Soul and said,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

"O people, fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul. From it He created its spouse, and from both of them scattered many men and women. Fear Allah, by whom you ask one another, and (fear) the wombs (lest you sever its relationship). Allah is ever watching over you." (4:1)

In addition to Quran and Sirah teachings regarding equality between Muslims and non-Muslims, in terms of citizenship, the principles of Ahle-Kitab are also counted respectful; therefore, in various examples from sirah of Ahlul Bayt, respecting rules of Ahle-Kitab which are based on their Divine Faiths is emphasized. For example, marriage

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custom has some conditions among some religions which are different from Islamic ones but Ahlul Bayt, opposed someone who swore one of the Ahle-Kitab for their customs. They explicitly reacted and asserted that marriage custom of each tribe should be based on its own religion, emphasized on the property of marriage custom of Ahle-Kitab. Accordingly, Imam Sadiq forbid Muslims of slandering Ahle-Kitab or what they are not informed of and treated people of other religions respectfully.

In a tradition from imam Baqir, we read, "*it is permitted for holders of any belief to perform whatever is permitted in their religion*."[16]

Or in another tradition from imam Sadiq, it is said, "*for each nation, there is marriage to stop adultery by it*."[17]

Therefore, in Sunnah of Ahlul Bayt, whether as a governor or non-governor, Ahle-Kitab deserves respect; they are equal to Muslims in this regard and even their laws are legitimate.

Kindness with Ahle-Kitab

One of the other ethical code of Ahlul Bayt is kindness to all including non-Muslims. Ali, the ruler of Islamic territory, advised the governor of Akbra (عکبراء) , "*when you come to them (Ahle-Kitab), notice not to sell their clothes for Jezyeh* جزیه*, even though it is summer and they do not need them; and do not put their food or animals on sale. I do not want you to beat even a lash on one of them because of money nor bother them in order to get money from them*."[18]

Or in another situation, he ordered his tax collectors, "*not to punish any Jewish person or Christian for tax or not to beat them or not to take their animals in return for tax and sell them*."[19]

As it is clear from the tradition, he observed justice regarding tax and kharaj خراج between Muslims and non-Muslims which is a crystal clear example of his just-oriented behavior between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Seeing a Nasrani disabled old man begging, Ali reprimanded his agents, "*why they had not taken care of him, he was serving for an Islamic government at his younghood and now due to aging and blindness, he needs others assistance*."[20]

In an order by Imam Ali to Malik, he said, "*be kind to people and have mercy on them because people are your brother who are having the same belief or are similar to you in their creation*."[21]

In this part of letter, followers of divine faiths and others are among those who are not Muslims but at least they are

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similar in their creation and therefore should be behaved kindly.

Ali in his letter to Malik advised him to pour his mercy and kindness to all. Therefore, an Islamic ruler should behave equally with Muslims and non-Muslims and not only do not hesitate giving them his kindness but also should replete them with his kindness. In this letter, imam Ali, as an Islamic governor, use the word ناس which means people (9 cases), servant meaning citizen (13 cases), عامه meaning all (3 cases), کل امری meaning each and every human being (2 cases), عبادالله meaning servants of God (1case) and more important نظیر لک فی الخلق meaning similar to you in creation (1 case). This asserts that his holiness in his order did not limit Islamic society to Muslims only and gave importance to kindness with everyone from religions, races, nationalities and culture.

Justice-oriented manner

One of the duties of government concerning nation is to have courts which are based on justice. The base of our claim is judgment of Ali (a.s.), which was definitely emphasized by Ahlul Bayt; as judgment is the pivot of justice, because a judge in an Islamic society defends people's right.

His holiness did not accept any violation of ethical codes while judging, for example not to behave differently with the parties to the dispute. At the time when he was the governor of Islamic society, a Jewish person sued him; Ali (a.s.) accepted the verdict of the judge which was against him, because he did not have enough evidence to prove his claim.[22] This story contains important points which not only shows the security of rights of Ahle Kitab in society, but also clears the responsibility of an Islamic society in supporting civil rights of minorities of each society.

Ali (a.s.) said about judgment: "*I swear by God! If a place is set for me to sit on, I will judge Torah-believers by their Torah, Gospel-believers by their Gospel, Zabur-believers by their Zabur and Quran-believers by their Quran in a way that each one of these Books will confess Ali was right. Truly, he judges the same as what God puts insides me*.

And you Muslims who recite Quran days and nights, is there any one among you who knows what in Quran is? Even there was only this one verse in Quran, I would be able to tell you what was, what is and what will be till the day of judgment by this verse and the verse is ***"Allah blots out, and He establishes what He will. With Him is the Essence of the Book."(13:39)***

يَمْحُو اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثْبِتُ وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ

Explanation of this by a person who is the symbol of justice, Ali, can result in peace and security for all people of a

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society even the followers of other religions. For example, Imam Ali, regarding those Ahle-kitab citizens who lived in Muslim society but drank wine said, "*If they committed it in their homes, or in worshipping sanctuaries, as long as it does not infect Muslims, do not bother them*."[23]

Or in a tradition from imam Sadiq, it is narrated that Ali wrote to his agent in Egypt, Mohammad ibn Abi Bakr, "*A Jewish women did adultery, order people of her community punish her as they went*."[24]

From these traditions, it become clear that his holiness while interacting people of society including each one of non-Muslim (Ahle-Kitab), not only behaved based on justice, even he acted upon their own books and rules or leave them to their own judges. His manner when facing Ahle-Kitab was when Islam governed a vast territory and Ahle-Kitab was in minority; therefore, he could judge them by Islamic rules without any problem; but even though some beliefs and rules of them were different from Islamic regulation, he, by revoking to ethical principles and considering dignity of people and respecting Abrahamic religions, honored their rules and let them judge based on their own religion and beliefs.

In Ali's point of view, responsibility of a rulership regarding people of an Islamic society is to observe public rights of people, Muslim or non-Muslim; not only he himself tried to respect their right but also supervise and be sensitive to others not to neglect people's right.

Loyalty in treaties

To be loyal to treaties not only is emphasized when Muslims are your partner, but even for non-Muslims and their enemies. It is natural that this advice includes Ahle-Kitab as well.

The holy Prophet, in his first days of Hijrah to Medina, signed a treaty pact with Jews of that city. By this treaty, different tribes of Medina united and made a single nation comprising of Jews and Muslims. In this treaty, it was asserted that the united groups which included muslims and Ahle Kitab could keep their own beliefs: Muslims keep their own beliefs and Jews keep their own beliefs and in each disputable issue, they should refer to God and His Prophet.[25]

In treaties and peace letters that Ali signed with religious minorities and non-Muslims, two points are significant. First, in all parts, he emphasized on respecting ethical values and honor of people and second he insisted on keeping promises. In a treaty that Islamic governor signed with Zoroastrian of Iran, leniency,

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compromise and kindness of Muslim governor with Zoroastrians can be seen.

In this treaty, Islamic governor gave two privileges to Zoroastrians: honoring human kind's dignity and ethical values.

In this treaty written in 39 AH., in the handwriting of imam Husain, the followings have been guaranteed: personal security, financial security, saving Zoroastrians' dignity and religious freedom, amnesty, and returning belongings and gifts of temples to the owners, tax-exemption and Jezyeh-exemption, being kind and merciful on them by agents of Muslim's caliphs and protecting governor of Zoroastrians.

In another treaty of imam Ali in 40th year of Hijri in Deir Jezghil دیر جزقیل, it is obviously mentioned that this treaty forced them to do good deeds and protect ethical values and dignity of human beings and forbade them from evil actions. Imam, in this treaty, gave two main privileges to Christians: first is personal, financial, grace security and in the light of it freedom in carrying out their religious duties and the other one is decreasing Jezyah.

Another time, in the text of this treaty, respecting Christians' leaders, not destroying churches, prohibition of breaking promises and likewise were highlighted.

Likewise, Ali, as a ruler of Islamic world, in his governmental decree called *Ahdname,* at the time of appointing Malik Ashtar as a governor of Egypt, wrote that God's satisfaction resides in peace. He also informed him of enemies plot and advised him to be prudent. He also wrote, "*If you conclude an agreement between yourself and your enemy or enter into a pledge with him then fulfill your agreement and discharge your pledge faithfully. Place yourself as a shield against whatever you have pledged because among the obligations of Allah there is nothing on which people are more strongly united despite the difference of their ideas and variation of their views than respect for fulfilling pledges.*

Besides Muslims, even unbelievers have abided by agreements because they realized the dangers which would come in the wake of violation (thereof). Therefore, do not deceive your enemy, because no one can offend Allah save the ignorant and the wicked. Allah made His agreement and pledged the sign of security which He has spread over His creatures through His mercy and an asylum in which they stay in His protection and seek the benefit of nearness to Him. Therefore, there should be no deceit, cunning or duplicity in it."[26]

In this way, Ahle-Kitab in Islamic territory, are not counted as foreigners and this term in Islamic laws is replaced with "allies" and when the contract is signed by two parts willingly, it causes unity.

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Saving security

Ahle-Kitab should live a secure life in terms of financial and personal aspects. When they are living in an Islamic society, their life and money should be secured. This responsibility is on the shoulder of government. However, this security will spread when Muslims pay attention to it. They could make government follow this rule. This consideration receives the highest emphasize from Quran, not only regarding life and money of minorities but it is on Muslim and Islamic governor to protect them from any attacks inside or outside of country.

Therefore, religious minorities and Ahle-Kitab are classified among those for whom an Islamic government should prepare security. For example, at the time of Ali's rulership, Mu'awiyah army attacked one of the cities in his territory; they killed a number of people, raid homes of Muslims and non-Muslims and harass them. When Ali was informed, he got angry and said, "*I heard that a man from Sham, attacked home of Muslim woman and home of non-Muslim woman who was in the custody of Islamic governor, they loot her anklet, bracelet, necklace, and earrings while these women had nothing to defend but tears and pleading! Sham army left there by good booties while none of them was hurt or injured and not a drop of blood was shed. But if a Muslim dies out of this sorrow [for this event] should not be blamed! It is natural in my idea*."[27]

This shows the importance and attention of Islamic governor that they should know themselves responsible to the life and money of non-Muslims and there is no difference between Muslims and non-Muslims in this regard.

Conclusion

The most significant feature of behavior of Ahlul Bayt when they face Ahle-Kitab includes ethnical-oriented manner, academic debates, respect, kindness, justice-oriented manner, loyalty in treaties, which their realizations have been manifested when they were in power, i.e. in the short time of their rulership.

Islam has always been emphasizing on dignity of mankind, no matter white or colored, religious or non-religious, Arab or non-Arab.

All debates and discussions of Ahlul Bayt were grounded on ethnicity and dignity.

Ahlul Bayt always counted academic, logical, reasonable, and friendly talks as key issues for inviting people to Islam.

Rules of other divine faiths which are derived from their authentic belief should be treated with respect.

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In social conflicts, any impoliteness, disrespect, improper reaction to people or their opinions should be avoided based on the view point of Islam and Ahlul Bayt.

From Ahlul Bayt point of view, justice is the main principle which should be the base of all disputes and no matter Muslim or non-Muslim, it should be considered.

"Security" is of the most significant Islamic commands which should be preserved by each and every individual.

[1] Nisa: 4
[2] Momtahanah: 1,9
[3] Anbiya: 1-7
[4] Al-Kafi, vol.2, p.648
[5] Ibid, vol.3, p.540
[6] Kafi, vol.2, p.67
[7] Mostadrik al-Vasail, vol. 11, p.31
[8] Ibid, p.30
[9] Nahj al-Balagheh, sermon 192
[10] Ale Imran, 3-4
[11] Daeem al-Islam, vol.1, p.369
[1212] Baqare: 256; Ale Imran, 64; Ankabot, 46
[13] Ikhtisas, p.151
[14] Al-Kafi, vol.8, p.60.n.26
[15] Tuhaf al-Ughulo, p.30
[16] Tahzib al-Ahkam, vol.9, p.322. no.4
[17] Al-Kafi, vol.2, p.324., no.5
[18] Nahjul Balaghe, letter 51
[19] Al-Kafi, vol.3,p.51
[20] Tahzib al-Ahkam, vol.6, p.293
[21] Nahjul Balaghe, letter 53
[22] Bihar al-anwar, vol.41, p.56
[23] Al-Kafi, vol.8, p.228, n.5; vol.8, p.229, n. 8
[24] Vasail al-Shia, vol.128, p.8, n.5
[25] Al-siyar al-Nabovatiyah, vol.1, p.357
[26] Nahjul balaghah, letter 53
[27] Tahzib al-Ahkam, vol.6, p.293

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