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Title Rising Trends of Islamophobia from the Western World and Its Eradication: An Exploratory Study in the Light of the *Seerah of Prophet Muhammad* (PBUH)

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Rising Trends of Islamophobia from the Western World and Its Eradication: An Exploratory Study in the Light of the *Seerah* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

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Abstract

*Islam has been misunderstood religion by the West, mainly due to the media's focus on just negative associations such as oppression, war, and terror, fist waving, or jumping on burning flags. The negative propaganda and projection of other religions would also yield the same results. Why the other side of the picture which is of pain and suffering by Muslims are not presented the same way? When some members of society are afraid of others it may lead to disturbance in society. Is Islam a religion of violence and a potential threat to Western societies? The history of Islamophobia begins from the medieval Makkan period since its foundation of Islam. But we see how enemies became best friends of Islam. How early Muslim community cope with the challenges of an anti-Islamic sentiment? How do they manage to build trust with other communities? The *Sīrah* heritage of the Prophet of Islam ((PBUH)) contains much material, guidance, and strategies to deal intelligently with this contemporary challenge of Islamophobia (an anti-pluralistic notion for a healthy society). This paper also examines the possible causes and sources of anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic sentiments over the last couple of decades and discusses possible ways of overcoming this phenomenon of fear as reflected by *Sīrah* of Prophet Muhammad ((PBUH)). This study will analytically examine the existing content of Islamophobia and will conclude with a qualitative research paradigm. It is perceived that Islamophobia is a growing trend in non-Muslim Societies' especially in the Western world in response to the grooving pace to spread of Islam. However, the teachings of the Prophet of Islam may become an active strategy to overcome that issue with proactive legislation against this antiemetic activity.*

Keywords: Islamophobia, western societies, Rising trends, *Sīrah* guidance, eradication.

Introduction

Rising Islamophobia is an undeniable phenomenon in Europe¹, the USA, and India as the PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West) movement in Germany, the Christchurch terror attack in New Zealand, the anti-Sharī'ah movement in the United States, the rise in attacks on Muslims in France after the attacks on Charlie Hebdo, discussion on Muslim's clothing/hijab and /or laws banning as Switzerland's ban construction on new minarets, attacks on mosques, online anti-Muslim campaigns including offensive tweets which need to be challenged. Denying Shariaphobia refers to the refusal to challenge it. Many Muslims avoid showing their identities openly (even some adopted nicknames, and some pronounce their names in a distorted way to hide their identity), some changed their regular habits in public places and some females stopped wearing hijabs due to the fear of being harassed.

There is a significant amount of literature and reports that showcase a wide spectrum of analysis of Islamophobia. Does Islamophobia exist? What is the motive behind it? What are the new forms and pictures of it, after almost two decades of 9/11? Has post-9/11 Islamophobia replaced anti-Semitism and fear of communism in the U.S.? Is Islam a potential threat to the West? Are Muslim immigrants a white man's burden? Who should take the responsibility of overcoming it? If Muslim minorities feel insecure and misrepresented, they will want to survive and thrive by being heard in a more conducive manner in light of their religious pursuits. Real pluralism can only be established in a truthful environment. Truth and pluralism together constantly form a healthy society. On the other hand, an unhealthy society that has irrational fears and bitterness among the citizens does not promote pluralism. Islamophobia is not justifiable in the Western liberal democratic and inclusive society. Anti-Muslim feelings exist in the United States and Western societies, as reflected in various manifestations². A problematic situation occurs when members of a society are afraid of each other.

What framework do people of the West apply to understand the religious and cultural lives of Muslims? Generally, surveys conducted about Islam are based on Western media's illustrations which depict an unrealistic picture of Islam to the Western world. The same would have turned out for other religions mis-presented similarly. Are some people born superior? Islam is a faith of human dignity and divinity (Qur'an 17:70) it is not a faith of color and forbids racial hatred. Is this anti-Islamic perception justified when people of the host countries are unaware of the fundamental humane values of Islam which is to live in peace and harmony with themselves and other fellow creatures? This and other questions will be addressed in this study under the light of *Sīrah of the Prophet Muhammad ((PBUH))*.

Research Methodology

The Analytical research methodology has been adopted in this research paper with qualitative paradigm. The data has been analyzed critically and content wise to reach a conclusion. Primary sources have been used to reach the conclusions of the article and secondary sources have also been used where necessary for further elaboration. In addition, modern sources of research: for example, the Internet, websites, research papers, e-books Islamic software, and blogs have also been used. Apart from this, discussions with contemporary experts and scholars in this field have also been consulted to complete this research. The customary

¹ Tariq Ramadan, a Muslim European (Swiss) thinker, the maternal grandson of Hassan al-Banna, the Brotherhood founder, while answering a question in Georgetown University says that Muslims Today A Radical Reform: Tariq Ramadan with John Esposito 9/11 (Available online) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5MdhTWfNk4> (Accessed on 7/12/2020).

² Mohammad Nimer, **Introduction: Islamophobia and anti-Americanism are mutually Reinforcing, in *Islamophobia and anti-Americanism: Causes and Remedies*. ed. Mohammad Nimer.** (Maryland: Amana Publication, 2007), 18.

format of the journal has been followed for sources, citations, and references. In the end, some specific results have been drawn after analyzing and augmenting the literature and in addition, some important recommendations also have been a motion to combat the issue.

Literature Review

Islamophobia is a growing concern in the Western world, with a significant increase in anti-Muslim sentiments and acts of violence in recent years. The purpose of the research paper titled "Rising Trends of Islamophobia from Western World and its Eradication: An Exploration in the light of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Seerah" is to explore the roots of Islamophobia and to suggest ways in which it can be eradicated. The study is based on the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as presented in his Seerah (biography). Some of the most relevant Literature Review on the under-discussion study is presented below.

Abubakar Abdullah (2020) discussed Islamophobia as an irrational fear and hatred of Islam and Muslims. It then explores the reasons behind the rise of Islamophobia in the Western world, including the impact of global events such as the 9/11 attacks, the rise of radical Islamist movements, and the portrayal of Muslims in the media. The study also looks at the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim communities, including increased discrimination, marginalization, and acts of violence³.

Ratna Istriyani and Yuliatun (2016) highlight the role of media in spreading and preventing Islamophobia. This study explores the Media as a Cause of Islamophobia from a Sociological and Psychological Perspective. The study elaborates that unfortunately, the mass media, especially electronic media, became an instrument and a cause of *Islamophobia* widespread around the globe, mainly through the canals of news about violence, radicalism, and terrorism which are often associated or identified with Islam. Therefore, it can be described that the media is loaded with political representation⁴.

Ruqaiya TA and Arshah I (2021) this study discuss different paradigms to examine the Prophet Seerah to combat Islamophobia strategies. The authors argue that Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) life provides a model for peaceful coexistence and respect for all people, regardless of their religion or beliefs. They also highlight the Prophet's (peace be upon him) emphasis on justice, compassion, and forgiveness, which can help to counter the adverse effects of Islamophobic trends.

Dhaya and Runell, Marcella (2007) one of the key findings of the study is the importance of education and awareness in combating Islamophobia. The authors suggest that education about Islam and Muslims can help to challenge negative stereotypes and promote understanding and respect. They also argue that Muslims must take an active role in promoting their positive image and countering misinformation about their religion and culture⁵.

Zine, J. (2022). The Canadian Islamophobia Industry: Islamophobia's Ecosystem in the Great White North. This study explores the role of government and community leaders in addressing Islamophobia. The authors argue that government policies must be developed that promote equality and respect for all people, regardless of their religion or beliefs. They also

³ A. A. Bukar, "The Political Economy of Hate Industry: Islamophobia in the Western Public Sphere", *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 5,2 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.13169/islstudj.5.2.0152>

⁴ Istriyani, R. Istriyani, "Media: Causes and Strategies to Overcome Islamophobia (Psychological and Sociological Study)", *Qijis qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 42 (2016), 201. <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v4i2.1759>

⁵ D. Ramarajan, & M. Runell, "Confronting Islamophobia in education I", *Intercultural Education*, 18, 2 (2007): 87–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980701327197>

call for community leaders to promote dialogue and understanding between different groups, and to take a strong stance against hate speech and acts of violence.⁶

Pervaz & Asad, (2022) this research paper provides a valuable contribution to the ongoing conversation about Islamophobia and the need to address it. The authors offer practical suggestions for combating Islamophobia, and they highlight the importance of education and community engagement in this effort. Overall, the study provides a useful starting point for further research and action on this important issue.⁷

In view of above-mentioned literature, it is perceived that the study highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing Islamophobia, including education, community engagement, and government action. The authors argue that the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) provide a valuable resource in this effort, and they call for increased efforts to promote understanding and respect for all people, regardless of their religion or beliefs.

Anti-Islamic Sentiments: An Ongoing Challenge to Pluralism

Have early Muslims ever lived as a peaceful minority with the people of other religions and civilizations? The Prophet's ((PBUH)) companions traveled extensively to various territories resided there, acquired, and appreciated native wisdom, and followed the cultural norms and practices (not contradictory to *Sharī'ah*). Religion was a major part of their lives and identity. Islam prohibits hating anybody based on religion or race which is why their non-Muslim neighborhood felt safe and secure. Their religious beliefs prevented them to commit any crime or follow something illegal or immoral in non-Muslim majority regions. Three productive models of early Muslim minorities are found which depict how Muslim men and women were misjudged initially and how they struggled to correct the distorted image and ultimately succeeded in their efforts.

a. The Makkah Model (610-622), shows the victimization and persecution of Muslim minorities by Islamophobes of Makkah. During this period, the marginalized Muslim community was afraid of being a victim of hate crime (Qur'an 8:26), and verbal and physical abuses, they were unsafe and always fearful that they would be treated adversely because of their religion. *Sīrah* heritage provides clear evidence of the violent aggression against the Muslim community, and suppression of Islamic beliefs and customs and elaborates on the experiences of companions as victims of hate crime or verbal attacks especially in the migration period. The Prophet ((PBUH)) manifested a rational response to years of violence in Makkah and strived hard to bring a greater understanding of Islam to the non-Muslim community, communicated the message of Islam respectfully, and always stressed an attitude of hope, gratitude, and patience. After the first revelation in 610 A.D very few people believed in the words of the Prophet Muhammad ((PBUH)), today the Muslim population is more than 1.8 billion across the globe with continuous growth, is self-evident that Islam is a religion of peace. How is it possible for a violent religion to become the second-largest religion in the world? It also illustrates that community investment never goes to waste.

b. The Madinah Model (622-632), Pre-Islamic Madinah was a divided society. The Prophet was fully committed to building a cohesive society and he took the rule of law as the principle. Muslims were misjudged by Jews of Madinah; the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) took concrete steps leading to mutually beneficial, stronger relations. The Prophet (PBUH) initiated the 'Charter of Madinah' for peaceful productive relations. He believed in the power of meaningful dialogue and its significance in shaping the idea of tolerance. He also formed

⁶ J. Zine, "The Canadian Islamophobia Industry: Islamophobia's Ecosystem in the Great White North", *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 7,2 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.13169/islastudj.7.2.0232>

⁷ B Pervaz, & Asad, T Asad, "Muslims' Coherent Strategy against the Rise of Islamophobia in France", *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 7,1 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.13169/islastudj.7.1.0056>

an intellectual and balanced community and said, “*Wisdom is the lost legacy of a Muslim he should get it wherever it is found*”⁸.

c. The Kingdom of Abyssinian (modern Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) Model. The migration to Abyssinia (615 A.D) was purely on religious grounds. On the contrary, Muslim migration to the West currently has mostly been on voluntary and materialistic grounds, and thus, the creation of religious problems is hard to understand and explain. How were they received in new territory? There are similarities between the early Muslims migration to Abyssinia although where their hosts were black and modern migrations to the West as migrant's mistreatment. How far were they prepared to adopt the cultural norms of new society? The Abyssinian model can be adopted for learning lessons and improvement in interfaith relationships. A delegation of Makkah portrayed a negative image of Muslims in Abyssinia and tried to get the immigrants back, Ja‘fir bin Abu Ṭālib bin ‘Abdul Muṭṭalib (d.629 A.D) voiced out in the court of Negus, it helped to minimize the misperception of Islam. It illustrates that all anti-Muslim incidents should be reported, and Muslims should know acceptable ways to express their concerns to the right forums because by remaining silent we make way for further persecution. Asmā bint ‘Umays, (wife of Ja‘fer, d. after 40 AH/661 AD) who returned (with three Abyssinian-born children ‘Abdūllah, Muhammad, and ‘Awn) to Madīnah after spending thirteen years as an immigrant in Abyssinia, narrates her plight and the state of Islamophobia prevailing in Abyssinia at that time, they were perilous, oppressed and afflicted by the people of Abyssinia and Muslims were tolerating it just for the sake of Allah and his Prophet (PBUH)⁹.

Does Islam inflame violence? In 2003, 43% of Americans believed that “Islam does not teach respect for the beliefs of non-Muslims”¹⁰. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life Poll in 2004 shows that almost 4 in 10 Americans are not in favor of Islam¹¹. The Question “Is America Islamophobic?” was on the cover page of “TIME” in August 2010. The report highlighted, “46% of Americans believe that Islam is more likely than other faiths to encourage violence against nonbelievers”¹². Franklin Graham, son of Evangelical giant Billy Graham, declares Islam is “a religion of hatred, it is a religion of war”¹³. Before 2001 many Americans registered no opinion at all due to lack of any knowledge. However, in the past and half decades, negative perceptions of Islam have become more widespread. Focusing more precisely on the association between Islam and violence, before 9/11, only 25% of Americans believed that Islam encourages violence, while 51 percent disagreed with that position; as of 2011, 40 percent say that Islam encourages violence, while 42 percent do not¹⁴. The 2011 Pew Global Attitudes Survey found the 30% of those polled in Britain and France 55% in Germany, and 63% in Spain have an unfavorable feeling towards Muslims in general¹⁵.

Networks and Sources of Islamophobic Trends in the West

⁸ Muhammad bin ‘Īsā Tirmidhī, *Jām‘al-Tirmidhī* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), Hadith #39.

⁹ M. b. H. Qusharī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, *Kitāb faḍā’il al-Ṣaḥābah Bāb faḍā’il Ja‘far bin Abī Ṭālib Musa’ Shāhīn Lāshī & Aḥmed ‘Umar Hāshim* (Eds.) (Beirut: Mouwssisāh ‘Izzuddīn, 1987), 5.

¹⁰ Esposito, John L Esposito, *The Future of Islam*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 180.

¹¹ Parvez Ahmed, *Prejudice is Real and Exacts a Heavy Toll, in Islamophobia and anti-Americanism: Causes and Remedies* (Ed). Mohammad Nimer. (Maryland: Amana Publication,2007), 32.

¹² *Is America Islamophobic Time August 30, 2010, report by Bobby Ghosh/Dearborn, 23.* (Available online) <https://dokumen.tips/documents/is-america-islamophobic-time-august-30-2010>. Accessed on 27/09/ 2018).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Carl W. Ernst, *The Problem of Islamophobia, in Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance.* (Ed). by Carl W. Ernst. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan,2013), 3.

¹⁵ Peter O’Brien, “*Islamophobia, Euro-Islam, Islamism, Post-Islamism: Changing Patterns of Secularism in Europe*”, in *American Journal of Islamic Social Science*, Volume, 30 Number. 03 (Summer 2013),69.

Who is behind the negative and inaccurate stereotypes of Islam and Muslims? Who is behind the Shari'ah fear-mongering? Is Shari'ah misogynistic, anti-Semitic, and homophobic? Shari'ah being a private matter for European and American Muslims, should not affect others as non-Jews are not affected by *Halakhah*. Abyssinian norms allowed medieval Muslim immigrants (in 616 AD) to follow and practice their religion so long as they did not conflict with the established laws of Abyssinia. At Present *Halakhah* Courts (as Beth Din of America) are working within the existing legal system of America. Nowadays, negative projection of Islam is being projected by the media but to what extent is its information reliable, complete, and objective?

Why does the media portray a negative image of Islam? Carl W. Ernst writes, "It is hard to say whether the organized networks of Islamophobia have had the chief responsibility for pushing American opinion against Islam. There are sectors of American culture that are predisposed to be hostile to Islam in any case"¹⁶. Well-funded organizations of a small group of individuals are responsible for manufacturing anti-Muslim propaganda¹⁷. Some Muslims think that the Western media invented Islam as the enemy¹⁸. In 2010 Pastor Terry Jones, Florida-based religious cleric, announced that he was planning to burn copies of the Qur'an (an extremely inflammatory action) on the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks against America. But because of large-scale criticism, and International and American leaders' pressure he avoided it. The Center for American Progress reported that seven right-wing foundations have financed over US \$40 million to manufacture and spread Islamophobia between 2001 and 2009, particularly by an alliance of five devoted think tanks headed by Frank Gaffney, David Yerushalmi, Daniel Pipes, Robert Spencer, and Steven Emerson. These professional Islamophobes with the assistance of a network of websites, bloggers, and news outlets step by steps promoted anti-Islamic messages quite aggressively¹⁹ (Carl, 2013). Esposito also explained, "that 7 foundations in the US have provided \$ 42.5 million in support to Islamophobes and their websites over the last decade"²⁰.

Remedy and the Way Forward In The Light of Prophet's Sirah

Perhaps Muslims feel more fearful now than ever before, they point out growing silent discrimination in many European countries in terms of not getting hired for a job or not being admitted for higher studies. In the post-9/11 era, Islamophobia has been industrialized, institutionalized, and systemized, books based on anti-Islamic themes became best sellers, authors became rich and famous in jiffy, and some former Muslims also worsened the situation and gained a lot of benefits. How can Muslims stop the growing misperception of Islam? What can Muslims do to make people of the West aware of the humanistic picture and universal values of Islam? How much is it needed? A survey by Kevin Dunn in 2006 found that one-third of Australians stated that they knew nothing about Islam and Muslims, while only about one in six Australians claimed to have a good understanding. A majority (56%) of those with no knowledge of Islam claimed to feel threatened by it²¹ (Jamila, 2013). All types of criticisms are not Islamophobia, by being balanced and transparent, the Muslim minority

¹⁶ Carl W. Ernst. **The Problem of Islamophobia, in Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance**, (Ed). by Carl W. Ernst, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 7.

¹⁷ Ibid, 9

¹⁸ Qasim A. Moini, **Europe's economic crisis may fuel Islamophobia**. (Daily Dawn Karachi, Thursday, November 17, 2011), 15.

¹⁹ Carl W. Ernst, **The Problem of Islamophobia, in Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance**, (Ed). By Carl W. Ernst. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 4.

²⁰ The International Conference on Islamophobia: Law and Media in Istanbul, organized by the Directorate General of Press and Information (BYEGM) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) between September 12-13, 2013 at Grand Tarabya Hotel, Istanbul with the participation of Turkish Deputy Minister Bulent Arinc and the OIC Secretary General Ekmelettin Ihsanoglu and several international scholars. (Available online) <https://www.meforum.org/3621/islamophobia-conference/> (Accessed on 27/09/2023).

²¹ Jamila Hussain, **Islam Its Law and Society**. (Sydney: The Federation Press, 2011), 5.

of the West should examine the actual complaints and concerns of the host nation and try to fill the gaps between Islamic theory and practices. Muslims also need to pay attention to quality education and professional skills to build a better image in the West. Esposito's approach is very optimistic as he says, "What we have seen about Islamophobia today and before is the tip of the iceberg and that the strength of Islamophobia today comes through social media"²². Finkelstein emphasized that definitions and labels were not useful, but rather tended to detract people from the main concern to find the reality²³.

One of the requirements in this age of globalization is building authentic and responsive legal institutions in Western countries that may help Muslims in their social and legal dilemmas and problems. It is also important to analyze how religious conflicts are documented, reported, and presented in media. Most of the Muslim reformists and revivalists have no media coverage, while terrorists and super-conservatives have a lot of coverage. Sufferings, sacrifices, and contributions of Muslim minorities are generally not acknowledged as the death of 358 Muslim employees in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.²⁴ Moreover, Yamani suggested, that Islam can contribute to the rebirth, in the West, of three essential values: the sense of community, in a part of the world that has become too individualistic; the sense of the sacred; and the legal sense. This can be the contribution of Islam to Western societies.

Muslims are very smart doctors' engineers and scientists, but now the Muslim community is in urgent need of a team of competent researchers to help journalists, lawyers, criminal justice practitioners, policymakers, lobbyists, and interfaith leaders to better address the problems and concerns that Muslims face in the West. Muslim community should prepare a band of social media industry and law experts, visual/ web and media content analysts, and professional documentary producers and filmmakers in Hollywood for unbiased projection of Islam. Islamophobic manufacturers and misinformation experts are empowering the extremists by repeatedly arguing that only the extremists' interpretations of Islam are authentic²⁵, and extremists are true representatives of Islam. We also need qualified religious leaders because the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions emphatically stress the value of knowledge other than religious emotions. The Qur'an (39:9) states, "Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know?" It is those who are educated with understanding that receive admonition. Religious scholars should try to comprehend the cultural, social, and religious context of the invitee, negotiate with them on common interests as the Qur'an (3:64) explicitly has stated, and appreciate the differences in perspectives, thinking, and values. The Prophet (PBUH) had created awareness about a faith community to which Maaz bin Jabal (18 AH/639 AD) was being delegated saying "*You are being delegated to the People of the Book*"²⁶.

The Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition provide a pluralistic framework for building better relationships with Ahl-e-Kitāb (Jews and Christians). Prophetic traditions (Ḥadīth) show that when dealing with people, one should consider their intellectual and religious status. Even individuals who profess to be non-religious or religiously unaffiliated should also be dealt with according to their mental levels. The Prophet (PBUH) met others and discussed matters of religion and worldly affairs in Masjid-e-Nabvī. At present, there is a

²² Andrew E. Harrod and Sam Nunberg [Breitbart](https://www.meforum.org/3621/islamophobia-conference/), "1st International Conference on Islamophobia on Law and Media" at Grand Tarabya Hotel, Istanbul. Organized by the Directorate General of Press and Information (Turkey) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), September 2013, (Available online) <https://www.meforum.org/3621/islamophobia-conference/> (Accessed on 27/09/ 2018).

²³ Ibid

²⁴ John L Esposito, **The Future of Islam**. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 234.

²⁵ Mark Tapson. **Islamic Supremacists pose a clear and present Danger in Islamophobia**, (Ed). Dedria Bryfonski (New York: Gale Cengage Learning, 2013), 131.

²⁶ Muhammad bin Ismā'īl Bukhārī, **Al-Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī** (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997) Hadith #.1496.

visible generation gap in the West between immigrants and their Western-born children. A great number of foreign Imāms (religious leaders in Islam) do not speak European languages and cannot attract the new Muslim generation. Despite the linguistic and cultural barriers, Ṣūfī (member of the mystical Islamic movement) preachers changed the hearts of people through the language of love as Bawa Muhaiyaddeen (d.1986 A.D), a Sri Lankan, Tamil-speaking Sufi, taking rest in Philadelphia USA, Sheikh Nazim (d.2014), a Cyprus based Sufi and now his disciple Sheikh Hisham Kabbani, a Lebanese-American Sufi continuing his legacy of love to humanity. Children are usually better educated than their parents, whose approach to religion they find unsatisfying. Foreign Imāms are not fully aware of the acute crises afflicting Muslims in the West and unable to provide proper answers and sound solutions to the burning queries/issues, but the community is having high hopes for them in this regard.

Lack of awareness and perhaps interest in contemporary issues make things worse. Interfaith Iftār dinner gatherings (during the blessed month of Ramaḍān) are great opportunities for building bridges, such activities should be encouraged. It will be beneficial to allow educational institutions (from school level to university) to meet real Muslims because in many places people of the West just heard about Muslims but never interacted to member of the Muslim community, and that will bring people together and develop a way to dialogue. The Prophet (PBUH) visited Souq ‘Ukāz and Souq of Majannah (pre-Islamic Arab Markets) to tell the people of other faiths about truths of Islam in a very dignified and simplified way, he also interacted with polytheists of Madīnah when they gathered for pilgrimage (pre-Islamic Ḥajj) in Makkah and ‘Aqabah Pledges took place.

Despite growing Islamophobia, many Americans and Europeans are converting to Islam and their religiosity is an eye-opener for Muslims residing in the West and other parts of the world. There are some exceptions such as John Walker (an American Taliban fighter in Afghanistan) but by and large converts to Islam, while not large in number, are playing a significant role in the public image of Islam. They can also help to create concrete bridges between Muslims and the West because they do not have language and cultural barriers. Over the years several Americans and Europeans have appealed to Islam through the vehicle of Ṣūfism, both in its more traditional and in its sometimes-trendy forms. By the mid-twentieth century many Ṣūfī groups had emerged in America. Their popularity was fostered by the resurgence of interest among young Americans in the religions of the East. Interest in Ṣūfism is increasing among young Muslims who are looking for a soft form of Islam in the context of growing American fears of radicalism. White Ṣūfī converts such as Hamza Yousuf of the Zaytuna Institute in California attract the young generation of society who want to immerse themselves in an Islamic atmosphere of study and piety²⁷ and many other Americans convert to Islam like Nooruddeen Durkee, Imam Zaid Shakir, co-founder of Zaytuna Institute, Suhaib Web, and Dr. Jeffery Lang etc. And in the West Abdul Hakim Murad (Timothy John Winter), Abu Bakr Sraj Ad-Din (Martin Lings), Hassan Abdul Hakeem (Charles le Gai Eaton), Murad Wilfried Hofmann, Yusuf Islam (Cat Steven) etc. are correcting the image of Islam in a very decent and scholarly way.

It is also obvious from the Sīrah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that Jews were judged by the Torah. A group of his companions were experts in the scriptures of people of other faiths and some of them were religious leaders before embracing Islam. A case of a Jew male and female about fornication was brought to the notice of the Prophet (PBUH), ‘Abdūllah bin Salām bin Ḥārith (d.43A.H /663 A.D), a former Jew, who assisted the Prophet (PBUH) in this official issue, because being aware of Jewish sacred scriptures²⁸. Ka‘b al-

²⁷ Jane I. Smith, **Islam in America. Muslim in the West after 9/11: Religion, Politics and Law**, (Ed), Jocelyne Cesari. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 31-32.

²⁸ *ibid*

Aḥbār (d. 652 A.D), Abū Ishāq bin Matī' al-Himyari, al-Ahbar, was a Yemenite Jew who converted Islam shortly after the demise of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). *Aḥbār* (plural of *Hibr* related to the Hebrew word Haber) is used for *Rabbī*. It is also reported that Ka'b al-Ahbar accompanied 'Umar bin Khaṭṭāb to Jerusalem in 636 A.D. and that he was asked by Mu'āwīyah to serve in Damascus, he settled in Hims where he died²⁹. A team of qualified Muslim religious scholars, well equipped in the comparative study of religions, well aware of contemporary issues faced by Muslims, and having a good command of leading languages could be a very small but positive step to foster mutual understanding, trust and to build bridges.

The language of communication and relationships between two communities are directly proportional to each other. Crusade literature, symbols and art reflects Islam as a religion of the sword. In 1987, thirteen years before 9/11, the American Author, Michal H. Heart, placed Muhammad (PBUH) at the top of the one hundred most influential persons in history, (Michal, 2000). His work was highly appreciated and translated into many languages. After the 9/11 tragedy televangelist Jerry Falwell used unethical and anti-pluralistic language for the Prophet (PBUH) of Islam like "man of war"³⁰ (Stephen, 2007), etc., and many others adopted the same path which is condemned. If we succeed in creating better relationships with the West such things will automatically cool down. Reconciliation (rather than confrontation) is the most recommended way of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which is called in the Qur'an as a beautiful example.

At present, Muslims have led towards weaknesses and decline because when the body's immune system is weak, all kind of viruses and bacteria attacks the system. Sīrah literature shows that the Prophet (PBUH) stabilized his credibility through humanitarian services and high moral values as being titled *Sādiq* and *Āmīn* (truthful and trustworthy) by the non-Muslim community before inviting them to Islam. At present, Muslim needs to revive the humanistic tradition of Islam and to be productive by their contribution to the society, caring their neighbors and fulfilling their commitments. The Early Islamic tradition of self-examination shows that at difficult times.

Muslim visionaries used to focus on identifying the weaknesses and their remedies instead of cursing others. At such a time Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (1058-1111 /450-505), a medieval Muslim *Ṣūfī*, and Jurist wrote around 500 books³¹ on numerous themes but none of them of the crusades (1095-1272 A.D) which occurred in his lifetime. It is not enough to be nostalgic about the golden past in which his ancestors were contributing and leading the world in all walks of life but to make their present worthwhile. The Prophet Noah's (PBUH) son had a pious father on the contrary he did not prove himself worthy of greatness, so he was punished by Allah with many others. Muslims living in non-Muslim majority countries must tolerate injustices, despite the aggression by a handful of misguided people. Muslims must behave in a responsible peaceful manner by following the Sīrah of the Prophet (PBUH) who prayed for those who wronged him.

Are we sincerely trying to free us from the shackles of backwardness? Is this Muslim's fate to remain the slave of time and circumstances? The attitude of cursing time and circumstances is against the teachings of Islam. Allah says, "*The son of Adam wrongs me for*

²⁹ Scott B. Noegel, **Dictionary of Prophets in Islam and Judaism**. (Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2002), 182.

³⁰ Stephen Prothero, **Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know -And Doesn't**. (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 206.

³¹ F Hassan, "*An Analytical Study of al-Ghazali's Contribution to Usul al-fiqh Interdisciplinary*," *Journal of Contemporary Research in Business (IJCRB) June Volume. 4, Number 2 (2012)*, 944.

*the curses al-Dahr (Time); though I am al-Dahr (Time). In My Hands are all things, and I cause the revolution of day and night*³².

Muslims are perceived differently in the West as uncivilized and stubborn who are not willing to adopt any change. This is also true that Islam is being damaged mostly by misguided Muslims. One of the hurdles to Muslims' progress is short-sightedness, and hollow high phraseology without the culture of practical thinking. Muslims can only progress through noble characters and deeds by ignoring sectarian differences. The *Sīrah* literature explicitly demonstrates that the Prophet (PBUH) kept the people following different backgrounds integrated into a single whole; so that all remain aligned for better deliverance in society. Muslims must have rationalistic approaches to attract a new generation of the West to be prepared for research-oriented defense of the resistance in all frontiers in which Islam is confronted. It is one of the ways to alter the state of psychological and cultural inferiority complexes. Islamic principles have the capabilities and flexibilities to encounter the challenges of modern times and Muslim jurists must play a vital role in turning Islamic vision into reality. Juristic traditions of Muslim Jurists in the past were efficient enough to respond quickly by giving timely juristic opinions on realistic grounds.

They interpreted the *Sharī'ah* in the light of the needs and realities of their time³³. While analyzing the current status of Muslims Yvonne Haddad, Professor at Georgetown University writes, "Muslim society itself became the symbol of victimization, of suffering as a consequence of the loss of its moorings, its resources and its political power, and of the military capacity of regain or preserve them"³⁴. Anti-Muslim thoughts and incidents did not begin with 9/11 and 7/7 but have existed since the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) till the present day. Why medieval Muslim community was successful in handling the issue of anti-Muslim hatred, but Modern Muslims were unsuccessful in doing so? Is Europe failing to counter anti-Muslim crimes?

Islamophobia itself a threat to European democratic values and it seems a failure of integration and damaging the image a pluralistic society, it is a clear violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The New Testament (Luke, 10:25-37) explicitly stresses to 'love your neighbor as yourself', refers not just to people whom you know but also to people whom you do not know. Mistreating strangers is also a violation of the Biblical value of hospitality. It is the civil duty of each member of a modern, multicultural, and pluralistic society not to create stereotypes because it will create a profound image of the USA and Europe in the Muslim world. Are some races born superior? Why do Muslims mostly go to Christian countries? Which framework did they apply in the past and what lessons can be taken now to protect them from hate attitudes? Is there any lesson in European Jewish history for European Muslims today?

Conclusion & Recommendations

Practicing the desired faith without any fear is a basic and non-negotiable right of everyone; therefore, anti-Muslim offense, anti-Semitism, and persecution of Christians or any other religion should be condemned and tackled by iron hands. There are several examples to show that Muslims have lived peacefully for centuries as minorities under non-Muslim rule. It seems that issues are created for some reason and every issue is well-connected to others that they have intended and unintended impacts on fellow human beings. Perhaps Orientalism (as mentioned by Edward Said) justified Islamophobia and the anti-American attack in 2001 intensified it, which led to the anti-*Sharī'ah* movement and bills against Islamic *Sharī'ah* passed in various States of America.

³² Muhammad bin Ismā'īl Bukhārī, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997) Hadith #. 7491.

³³ M. H Kamali, *Shari'ah Law an Introduction*. (England: Oxford One word, 2009), 99.

³⁴ Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "Islamist Depictions of Christianity in the Twentieth Century: The Pluralism Debate and the Depiction of Other. In *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*," *Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Volume. 7, Number, 1 (1996).

Muslims have been trying for the last few decades to ensure that they are neither terrorists nor terrorist sympathizers. They are also trying to refute their negative portrayal in the media, and they will be engaged next few decades in defining and defending peaceful Islam. Self-assessment to be a more socially responsible person and development with political, social, cultural, and religious renewal are needs of the hour. Muslims should track down the causes of events instead of judging the events themselves. It is always important how someone reacts in crucial times as recently LGBT equality lessons were included in UK schools without consulting parents. The mind can be trained to see the positive in any situation. Media portrayal is one of the sources for shaping the negative public image of Islam. Muslims should place major emphasis on belief and behavior, especially in situations where they face the challenge of reconciliation. There are examples in the revealed scriptures that evil should not be tolerated, and criminals should be punished. But there must be a difference between accountability and revenge.

Muslim majority believes in national reconciliation, and unity and wants to live in peace with others, so all Muslims should not be blamed for the wrongdoing of a few black sheep. Islamic civilization is an integral part of human civilization and promotes harmony and peaceful coexistence. Therefore, Muslim's voices should be heard and they should not be excluded and marginalized. Violence can never be justifiable, and words of hate might lead to acts of violence. Islam is being understood by the West especially after the tragedy of 9/11 as Judaism was misperceived in the nineteenth century and Christianity was misperceived for a long time in the Roman Empire until Constantine-1.

The West must look at the pain and suffering of the world with new eyes. The pain and suffering of mankind should be documented and shared in the age of globalization when we all are electronically linked. Violence is not the result of the religiousness of people, but it is a product of negligence. Dreams of surviving and living peacefully in the present century can only be fulfilled when conflicting civilizations find solutions to their problems because of equality and mutual respect. We should focus on diagnosing human religious sufferings and refrain from attacking, abusing, defaming, or distorting others orally or in writing to make this planet a better place for our contemporary human family and future generations.