

# Aligarh Journal of Interfaith Studies



Peer Reviewed, Open Access International Journal  
ISSN: 2582-7553 | Impact Factor | ESTD Year 2020



JOURNAL OF ALIGARH INTERFAITH CENTER (AIC)

## Pluralistic Trends in Islamic Studies: A Study of Prof. Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui

Dr. Mohammad Muslim<sup>1</sup>

ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article History</b> Published Online: _Published_</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b></p>	<p>Modernity has created new questions for religious scholars, theologians, philosophers and scholars of Islamic studies.</p> <p>Modern science, scientific theories and legal systems have challenged all religious orthodoxies, including Islam. Contemporary Muslim scholars call for revisiting and reformulating the agenda for future. Some of the scholars have focused on the pluralistic trends to be traced in the life and teachings of the holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Among them one of the influential Muslim scholar is Professor Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddique (1944-2020) who studied <i>Sirah</i> for the solutions of minorities' problems in contemporary world..</p>

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, AMU, Aligarh



## Life

Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui was born on 26 September 1944 in the Lakhimpur Kheri district of United Provinces of British India. He graduated in the traditional dars-e-nizami studies from Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama in 1959, and mastered in literature at the University of Lucknow in 1960. He passed the intermediate exams from the Jamia Millia Islamia in 1962 and then acquired B.A. in 1965 and B.Ed. in 1966 from the same university. In 1968, Siddiqi received his M.A. degree in History, M.Phil in 1969, and PhD in 1975 from the Aligarh Muslim University. His teachers included Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, K. A. Nizami, Abd al-Hafiz Balyawi and Rabey Hasani Nadwi.<sup>i</sup>

Siddiqui was appointed a research assistant in the history department of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) in 1970. He became a lecturer of History in 1977 and Syed Hamid transferred him to the Institute of Islamic Studies, (AMU) in 1983. He became a Professor of Islamic Studies in 1991 and served as the director of Institute of Islamic Studies (AMU) from 1997 to 2000. In 2001, he was appointed as the director of Shah Waliullah Research Cell of the Institute of Islamic Studies (AMU). He retired from the Institute of Islamic Studies on 31 December 2006 but retained the position of director of the Shah Waliullah Research Cell for ten years. Between 2000 and 2010, he arranged about ten national and international seminars about the different aspects of Shah Waliullah Dehlawi's life and wrote eighteen books.<sup>ii</sup>

Professor Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui wrote more than 40 books and 300 research articles in Urdu, Arabic and Persian. His writings on the Prophet and his teachings got wide acclaim. He wrote extensively in reputed literary journal, 'Nuqoosh' and got international 'Nuqoosh Award', 'Seerat-e-Rasool Award' and 'Seerat Nigari Award'. Professor Siddiqui, an alumnus of Aligarh Muslim University worked for ten years at the department of History before joining the department of Islamic Studies as a



Reader, and later he became professor and chairman of the department. He also served as the Provost of Aftab Hall.<sup>iii</sup>

Professor Siddiqui was conferred with the fifth Shah Waliullah Award by Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi on 24 September 2005. He died on 15 September 2020 in Aligarh, UP, India.<sup>iv</sup>

### **The Prophet Muhammad (SAW): A Role Model for Muslim Minorities**

Professor Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui's famous work, *The Prophet Muhammad (SAW): A Role Model for Muslim Minorities* provides many suitable instructions for Muslim minorities in those state in which Non-Muslims dominate in the political, economic and socio-cultural domains. This book was published by a leading western Islamic publishing house, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK in 2006 (pages 230, ISBN: 0860375358).

This work of professor Siddiqui is divided into 7 chapters. Very first chapter deals with the "Pluralistic Society of Makkah". In this chapter Professor Siddiqui has discussed the Makkan society in which Muslims were persecuted in the name religion but Prophet Muhammad (SAW) lived full thirteen years patently without any conflict.<sup>v</sup>

The second chapter, "Evolution of the Muslim Minority in Makkah" deals with the socio-religious conditions of Muslims in Makkan pluralistic society. How to preach your faith peacefully in such a hostile surroundings told by Prophet of Islam.<sup>vi</sup>

In the third chapter, "The Muslim Community of Abyssinia" presents how to live in a non-Muslim country as a minority. Muslims in Abyssinia lived freely without compromising their basic belief and moreover preached oneness of Allah before the king. What is the relation of Islam and Christianity, and what is the place and value of Prophet Jesus in Islam articulated by Muslims before Negus, king of Abyssinia. <sup>vii</sup>



Chapter fourth of the book, “Formation of the Muslim Ummah in the Makkan Period” discuss how Muslims in Makkah survived in the period of persecution. Their relations and affairs were very friendly with non-Muslims of Makkah. But they never compromised with their fundamental belief. On the other hand, all types of ties were normal irrespective of their faith. No Muslim was asked to snap his ties with his non-Muslim parents. Rather, according the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), Muslims were obliged to serve and help as much as possible. These were etiquettes of the Makkan Muslims by which they attained social cohesion.<sup>viii</sup>

In the Chapter 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, Professir Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi tells us that in Makkah there was a defense system, defense agreement among the tribes and right to defend with all sections and communities. He says that, this is wrong to say Muslim minorities in Makkah did not have right to defend their life, property and faith. Every tribe of Makkah was obliged to protect, help and cooperate their members.<sup>ix</sup>

In the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter, “Muslim Minorities after the Formation of the Islamic State” Professor Siddiqi describes regular residence of some Muslims in Makkah after migration. Until the conquest of Makkah, Muslims lived there for eight years under the persecution. But they were not directed towards any conflict or disturbance by Prophet Muhammad (SAW).<sup>x</sup>

### **Lessons for Today**

Professor Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi, In the light of deep study of *Sirah*, has reached the following conclusions which instruct Muslim minorities in today’s context.

#### **1. Reformative Approach:**

The Prophet Muhammad’s (SAW) life provides a unique role model for the Muslim minority. Islam was not determined to extirpate fully the *Jahiliyah* Arab culture and civilization. It was not



after demolishing each and everything. Rather, it opted for the middle way by way of reforming, adapting, restoring and reconstructing the existing order. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) reformed all such Arab social practices which were injurious to morals, health and faith. Instead of removing existing Arab practices, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) introduced new practices, rites, rituals, deeds.<sup>xi</sup>

Muslims should make their beginning as a minority. If they follow divine laws and the Prophet's guidance this minority would gradually register growth like Madinan Muslims. With the passage of time they would attain majority status. In the Makkan period the same philosophy of life was adopted by Muslim minority. This brought to them progress and glory. This is a lesson for the today's Muslim minority around the world that they must follow principles of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the holy companions while they were in Makkah. How they lived there, and established relations with the non-Muslim majority is a great matter and adventure.

## **2. Collectivity:**

By the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), both faith and good deeds were prescribed as the essential prerequisite for the formation and evolution of the Muslim minority in Makkah. Apart from having conviction in Islam deeds should be performed sincerely for Allah's sake. Both these components are equally valid and important. It helps build the character of Muslims and they grow as members of the Muslim community. In Islam individual life does not have much significance. In the absence of the community, however, an individual Muslim stands out as the middle community. It is a duty of every Muslim to maintain close relations with brethren in faith. Various theories and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and holy companions urging collectivity and the unified society appeared on the scene at a much later date. The scriptures and messengers of Allah instructed mankind long ago in



the dual role of man as individual and as a member of the larger community. They said that every member of the community should participate actively in the collective life. On the one hand, a Muslim is a sincere, loyal servant of Allah and on the other, a dedicated member of the Muslim community. This is required of every Muslim. Muslims must reflect brotherhood in the social life of the community. It should not be only as a mere slogan.<sup>xii</sup>

The above point is recognised by the Prophet's (SAW) words and deeds. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) remarked that, "the Muslim community is like a single body. If any part of the body is hurt, the pain is felt in the entire body. Only when that part is cured, does the body attain relief"<sup>xiii</sup>. This is the philosophy of a community's social life. Without mutual help, cooperation, love, no minority would go on the path of progress. The Quran and Hadith speak of the perfect structure and solid foundation to describe the relationship. The Prophet (SAW) had infused a strong collective spirit into the Makkan Muslim minority. Individual interests were secondary to the community welfare. All Muslims were brethren and friends to one another. Mutual love, respect, and fraternity characterized them. Above all, they were blessed with divine mercy which supported them.

The spirit of collectivity in the Makkan Muslim minority began with the profession of faith in the one true God. Islamic commands and teachings made Muslims fully subservient to Allah. Their devotion to Allah united them also as members of the same religious community. They were imbued with a strong sense of being members of a single community. *Tawheed*<sup>xiv</sup> (oneness of Allah) and the worship of Allah provide the basis of the collectivity in Islam. Muslims are bound and sustained by mutual help and cooperation. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) encouraged this spirit among them in the Makkan period.

This religious bond transformed their entire society and way of life. The prophet Muhammad (SAW) accorded priority to the tie of religious fraternity, placing it above kinship. But should keep i



mind that he (SAW) never abolished the sacredness or significance of blood ties. However, he placed it at its proper place in wider context of Islam. Blood ties have importance in their own way. Even in the Makkan period, kinship was highlighted and the Prophet (SAW) accorded it its due place. Yet a balance was achieved between kinship and religious fraternity. Islam provided the larger context and ties of kinship were subordinated to it. The two do not cancel out each other. Rather, these affirm one another.

## **2. Preaching Islam:**

In Makkan period, preaching was the most effective strategy. It was the key to developing the collective spirit among Muslims. The same holds true even today. Within a short period of thirteen years, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) expended Islam from a single person to a hundreds strong Muslim community in Makkah. With the passage of time, Islam spread far and wide across the Arabian Peninsula. Eventually it grew into the Muslim majority state of Madinah. A universal dimension of Muslim community came into light in Abyssinia. The entire growth was possible only to the preaching of Islam. It is evident from history that Arabs gave priority to preaching Islam. Only in such countries where preaching was neglected Muslims remained as minority group. For the Muslim rulers paid no heed to their basic duty. These Muslim communities were responsible, in equal measure, for it. Preaching faith vigorously is a magical formula for converting a minority into a majority, and ensures the survival and identity of the minority. This is demanded by the concern and love for humanity that if one regards his faith as the key to success in this world and means for deliverance in the next world, he should convey it to everyone, especially his countrymen. For one's success in both the worlds should not blind him to the welfare of his own friends, kith, kin, and men and women at large. He should not let them be consigned to hellfire.<sup>xv</sup>





The Prophet's (SAW) main strategy in Makkah was preaching Islam. The methods he adopted for it are equally valid and effective today. His preaching in private was not special to the Makkan minority phase. The same is useful for all such societies. Rather, it is all the more relevant in view of the prevalent psyche of people. It was an outstanding feature of the Arabs that once truth came on them; they preached it very sincerely to others. Preaching is highly effective if carried out consistently. Constant efforts move mountains. The divine message is bound to influence people, provided it is carried out consistently. Doing something consistently has its specific psychological value and effectiveness. It strengthens both individuals and community. It introduces a collective sprit in their faith and thought.

Preaching privatively has its universal effectiveness. The Prophet's strategy was undoubtedly eternal. His main was to approach his address directly. He conveyed his message to individuals, groups and gatherings, regardless of time and place. As the range of preaching widened, and the truth spread, many seekers of the truth themselves approached the Prophet (SAW). The Prophet's other main principle was that the message of Islam be conveyed to everyone by every conceivable means. Along with the companions he went door to door and informed people through caravans. They won over the hearts by their worship. New Muslims were sent back as preachers to their respective hometowns. They were asked to stay there, which opened the way for spread of Islam. For thirteen years Prophet Muhammad (SAW) followed all such methods for preaching Islam and attained success. Implicit in it is the guidance for Muslims, be they in minority or Majority, that they should draw upon all means of communication- oral, written, radio, television, computer to which everyone has access today. Their use for preaching faith is significant and may accrue far reaching consequences. For the message of Islam can thus reach everyone.





Preaching privately is important for the Muslim minority today, for unnecessary publicity evokes a strong reaction, obstructing people from embracing truth. The opponents resort to propaganda for intensifying the reaction which ultimately poisons the minds of unsuspecting people and they disregard the message altogether. In preaching Islam the principle of conveying the message in an appropriate way is of great importance. Once the community emerges, the truth may be preached even publicly. However, it is not obligatory to do so. If public preaching is useful, it may be adopted. Otherwise it should be avoided. In the Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) preaching mode the Quran was an integral part. Other sources may, no doubt, be tapped. The Quran, being the word of God has its own impact.

#### **4. Centres of Education and Training:**

According to Professor Siddiqui, for maintaining their identity and for preaching faith among the majority community it is essential for the Muslim minority to set up centres of education and training for making the call to faith. This was a very effective practice of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) while he was in Makkah. As per the need, centres should not be limited in numbers, rather they should establish in every locality, village and town. These centres may be affiliated with mosques and other institutions. Local centres are more active effective and wide ranging. These centres may attract community members at least five times daily prayers. This opportunity should utilize for religious training and for preaching among others. These local centres provide guidance and promote collectivity. In both Makkah and Madinah the real task was accomplished by local persons. Today they can again perform the same role.<sup>xvi</sup>

**5. Hijrah:** Another principle of the Makkan Phase was that wherever a Muslim minority was unsafe, in terms of its faith and life and property, it was asked to join another Muslim group or to a safer place. This is called in the history of Islam as Hijrah



(migration). We saw that Makkan Muslims migrated to Abyssinia first to save their faith and life. After Abyssinia, Muslims migrated to Madinah paving the way from the emergence of dominant Muslim community.<sup>xvii</sup>

## **6. Social Security System:**

It is evident from the social life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in Makkah that he utilized fully the prevailing Arab social security system both for himself and other Muslims. He lived under the protection of Banu Hashim. This is very important for a Muslim minority in today's world to make coalition with secular and patriotic groups and political organizations. Being a minority, to join a single political party may be harmful. They should join more than one political party.<sup>xviii</sup>

## **7. Social Power:**

Through the pursuit of modern education, Muslims may acquire social power by service of humanity. Religious education, no doubt is very important for Muslims to save their faith and identity. At the same time Muslim community should be fully grounded in modern education. We saw, in the middle ages Muslims contributed a lot to the science and technologies. Non-Muslims were dependent on the discoveries of Muslims in every field. They were silent against Muslims and Islam. They wanted support of Muslims in the field of education. This was the social power of Muslims in middle Ages.<sup>xix</sup>

## **8. Religious Scholarship:**

Like any minority, Makkan Muslims had to defend their faith, their community members and their entire community. This defence was both ideologically and physically. Under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) the Makkan Muslim minority successfully managed to discharge this duty. Muslims had to vindicate that the Quran is the word of God. They had to



face attacks of Quraysh, both intellectually and physically, directed against the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and weak Muslims of Makkah. The Quran enabled Muslims to vindicate their faith and practices. Muslims resorted to literature in both prose and poetry in order to defend their faith, the Prophet and community. It was not possible without premising themselves on a particular worldview and thought pattern. They could mount this ideological, religious, social and cultural defence with help of their scholarship.<sup>xx</sup>

### **9. Possession of Resources:**

For the survival and the growth of the Muslim minority it is important to have educational excellence, religious superiority, collectivity, strong economy and sound financial condition. Rather, it is their religious duty to achieve all this. It is pity that poverty is preferable to affluence in Muslim psyche. They regard poverty as the means for attaining deliverance. *Ulama* and the *Sufi* Masters have given general currency to the above notion. Islam recommends possession of resources. Lack of resources is utterly deplorable. Wealth underlines the order prescribed by Islam. It looks down upon neediness, misery and weakness.<sup>xxi</sup>

### **10. Religious Identity:**

Identity is a crucial issue for a community, especially for minorities. It has been a complicated problem for the Muslim minority. Their identity is central to their survival an integral part of their social life, fraternity, and unity. At the same time, many problems arise on account of their identity. For it is perceived as the sign of their assertion and refusal to surrender to the mainstream culture. It is Islam which invests them with identity, both inwardly and outwardly. Notwithstanding all the adjustments, Islam adopts a particular code in all spheres of life, ranging from food and drink to lifestyle, social norms, intermixing of men and women, education and training, political and economic



order and all cultural matters. Islam demands the believers to display their identity. It is not therefore, surprising that the Muslim minority holds its identity very dear.<sup>xxii</sup>

### **11. Social Relations with Majority:**

To make social relations with the majority community is very helpful for Muslim minority to survive in the respective state. Islam does not approve total separation of Muslim minority from non-Muslim society. At the social and humanitarian level Muslims are directed to forge cordial social relations with all. Islam is, no doubt, firmly opposed to polytheism but never directed Muslims to separate from Muslims at all levels. This is a powerful tool to convey the message of Islam among non-Muslims. We should treat non-Muslims very well.<sup>xxiii</sup>

It is evident from the Prophet's (SAW) practice in the Makkkan period that he and his companions maintained social relations with their non-Muslim society and made every allowance for them, except in religious matters.

### **12. Spiritual Power:**

Muslims, be they in majority or minority stand obliged to adhere to their faith and devote themselves fully to Allah regardless of the directive for them to draw upon material resources. Islam prescribes spiritual growth as a prerequisite for material prosperity. Logically speaking, if a Muslim is not committed fully to Allah, His messenger and Islam his claim to faith cannot be taken seriously.<sup>xxiv</sup>

These are few instructions pointed out by the learned scholar for Muslim minorities in today's context. How to survive in a hostile atmosphere, realized through the life of Prophet Muhammad SAW and his companions in Makkah. If a minority follows these principles, it could attain majority status with the passage of time.



## Conclusion

In my opinion, Professor Siddiqi's work is very relevant for the Muslim minorities in contemporary world. We are experiencing many challenges and problems of Muslim minorities around the world. How to survive in a pluralistic society, how to live peacefully in a pluralistic society, how to revive their culture being a minority; suggested very beautifully and intellectually by Professor Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi.

## REFERENCES

- 
- <sup>i</sup> Maaarif, October 2020
  - <sup>ii</sup> Maaarif, November 2020
  - <sup>iii</sup> The Milli Gazette Online, 15 September 2020
  - <sup>iv</sup> By Dr. Tauseef Ahmad Parrey in *Muslim Mirror* of September 25, 2020
  - <sup>v</sup> Siddiqi, Prof. Muhammad Yasin Mazhar. *The Prophet Muhammad (SAW): A Role Model for Muslim Minorities*, Leicester, U.K., The Islamic Foundation, 2006, pp. 1-23
  - <sup>vi</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-54
  - <sup>vii</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-86
  - <sup>viii</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-111
  - <sup>ix</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112-153
  - <sup>x</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 154-172
  - <sup>xi</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 173-175
  - <sup>xii</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 175-178
  - <sup>xiii</sup> Sahih Muslim, Hadith Numbere-6261
  - <sup>xiv</sup> First fundamental article of faith, and one of the five pillars of Islam.
  - <sup>xv</sup> Siddiqi, Prof. Muhammad Yasin Mazhar., *The Prophet Muhammad (SAW): A Role Model for Muslim Minorities, Op. Cit.*, pp. 178-181
  - <sup>xvi</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 181-182
  - <sup>xvii</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183
  - <sup>xviii</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 183-185
  - <sup>xix</sup> *Ibid.*, 185-186
  - <sup>xx</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 186-188
  - <sup>xxi</sup> *Ibid.*, 188-191
  - <sup>xxii</sup> *Ibid.*, 191-192
  - <sup>xxiii</sup> *Ibid.*, 192-196
  - <sup>xxiv</sup> *Ibid.*, 196-197