

Quranic Concept of Freedom of Expression A descriptive Study in Modern Socio-Political Perspective

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The freedom of expression is one of the most significant and hot issues in liberal societies in present days. Freedom of expression means "Right to express one's ideas and opinions freely through speech, writing, and other forms of communication without any restraint". Consequently, all modern institutions, constitutions and organizations include UNO promote it very much. The Holy Quran considers freedom of expression as a fundamental human right from fourteen hundred years ago because it appeals to sociology and describes every important social issue. . There are many verses of Quran describes the right of Expression. Quran gives some important areas, objectives and principles of freedom of expression. In Islamic perspective freedom of expression is not only a right but sometimes it also becomes an absolute duty of a Muslim. Allah Almighty grants the freedom of expression due to human dignity, honour and free thinking. Quran also mentions some important areas and its objectives of the freedom of expression. Moreover, Quranic freedom of expression has some limitations to save the society from negative impact as harm, divisions and anarchy etc. This article presents the Quranic concept of freedom of expression, its definition, objectives, important areas, principles and limitations. Although sometimes there are adopted comparative and analytical approaches but actually, it is a descriptive study of Quran in modern Socio-political perspective on the right of Freedom of Expression.

Key Words

Islam, Cottage industry, Employment, Rural Women.

Introduction:

Freedom of expression is an important and fundamental human right in Islam. Quran discusses it briefly. There are many verses of Quran which describe freedom of expression its importance and principles. The basic principle of Quranic conversation is good talking.

As Allah says in the Holy Quran:

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

“And speak fairly to the People.”¹

A common theory about Islam is that Islam bans the freedom of expression. This is a totally wrong theory. I think this is due to bigotry or ignorance from Islamic concept of human rights. As Abdullah Ben Abdul Mushin Al-Turki said:

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“In fact, due to the ignorance about these human rights (Islamic Human rights) and lack of proper knowledge about them, the reputation of Islam and the Islamic ruling and governing is distorted in the eyes of the rest of the world.”²

Islam does not ban the freedom of Expression but Islam describes its limitations and principles.

According to the Holy Quran:

وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ

“So avoid the uncleanness of idols and avoid false statement.”³

Another place Allah directs to the Muslim that they will adopt true speaking in every matter of life.

As Allah states in the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

“O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and (always) say a word directed to the Right”⁴

In my point of view Quran describes the freedom of expression as fundamental right but also points out the principles and limitations of freedom of expression for peaceful and humble society.

Definition:

There is no specific and limited definition of the freedom of Expression. Every person and group defines it according to its needs and requirements. There are many definitions of Freedom of the expression. Some important of them are as Follows.

According to the Legal Dictionary:

“Freedom to communicate ideas without restraint, whether orally or in print or by other means of communication”⁵

According to the New World Encyclopedia:

“Freedom of speech is the ability to speak without censorship or limitation. Also called freedom of expression, it refers not only to verbal speech but any act of communicating information or ideas, including publications, broadcasting, art, advertising, film, and the Internet.”⁶

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia:

“The right of individual to express or communicate in a more or less public way his views without interference from other individuals or groups or from social authority.”⁷

According to the UNO Declaration (UDHR)⁸ of 1948:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." ⁹

A prominent western Scholar David H. Bialy defines freedom of expression as:

"The absence of restraints upon the ability of individuals or group to communicate their ideas to others, subject to the understanding that do not in turn coerce others into paying attention or that they do not invade other rights essential to the dignity of others." ¹⁰

The freedom of expression is a new issue so; I could not search any specific definition of this term in Islamic perspective. A low number of Muslim scholars define this term.

According to a prominent Muslim scholar Dr. Abdul Hakeem Hassan *Al-Eili*:

"The Freedom of expression means to be a free man in the formation of his opinion and it is not depending on others or free to show these opinion and announcement in a manner it deems" ¹¹.

According to the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights (CDHR) ¹²:

"Everyone shall have the right to express his opinion freely in such manner as would not be contrary to the principles of the *Shari'ah*." ¹³

In the above definitions of western scholars David H. Bialy definition is better than others due to some limitations and care of other feelings. It is also a near to comprehensive. One thing is common in this definition that there are no boundaries of freedom of expression except D H Bialy.

Basic Objectives:

The Glorious Quran gives a lot of importance to the freedom of the expression due to some important reasons.

These are as follows:

Discovery of truth:

The very first and fore essential objective of right to free expression is discovery of truth. Many of the Quran's verses and *Ahadith* of Prophet (SAW¹⁴) guide us to this aspect.

Allah says in the Holy Quran:

هَذَا كِتَابُنَا يَنْطِقُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّا كُنَّا نَسْتَنْسِخُ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

“This, Our record, speaks about you in truth. Indeed, We were having transcribed whatever you used to do.”¹⁵

Another places Allah states in the Holy Quran:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

“Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience.”¹⁶

The holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SAW) say in a Hadith:

“The best form of Jihad is to tell a word of truth to a tyrannical Ruler.”¹⁷

Honour of Human Being:

The second basic objective of right to free expression is human honor and dignity. As a famous scholar of Malaysia Muhammad Hasim Kamali says in his Book:

“Freedom of expression also compliments human dignity. For the essence of character and personality is reflected in a person’s opinion and judgment.”¹⁸

Quranic Verses and Prophet Sunnah also provide a road map regarding to this.

According the Holy Quran:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

“And We have certainly honored the children of Adam.”¹⁹

Allah Almighty honor to the human being many times in the Holy Quran.

As Allah Says in another place:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

“We have certainly created man in the best of stature”²⁰

According to Dr. Tahir Qadri human rights in Islam are related to human dignity.

“The concept of human rights in Islam consists of human dignity, honor and equality of human being.”²¹

Fundamental Human Right:

The third very important objective to free expression is Freedom of expression is a fun fundamental human Right in Islam.

According to *Sayed Maududi* :

“Islam gives the right of freedom of thought and expression to all citizens of the Islamic State on the condition that it should be used for the propagation of virtue and truth and not for spreading evil and wickedness.”²²

There are two types of human rights; General human rights and fundamental human rights.

Muhammad Hasim *Kamali* says about fundamental human rights in Islam.

“A right which is founded in a clear Quranic injunction, such as the right to life, to property to privacy, the right of movement, the parents over their Children, the right to justice, the personal dignity and honor and equality before the law and so forth, may be classified as fundamental human rights.”²³

According to the Quran and *Hadith* the Freedom of Expression is also a fundamental human right.

Allah Almighty describes in the Holy Quran:

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

“And speak fairly to the People.”²⁴

These were three important objectives of right to free Expression in Islam and Quran. We see in early Muslim society the impact of this freedom of expression. Muslims was more tolerant and even they gave the freedom of expression to non Muslims.

As a western scholar D. Sahas said:

“At the beginning the Muslims were tolerant towards Syrians, a fact which the latter did not fail to notice.”²⁵

Major Areas:

Freedom of expression has some major areas or types to understand and explain this term. Quran also discusses some important areas of Freedom of Expression. These are as follows.

Freedom of criticism:

Freedom to criticize is an important type of freedom of expression. According to Islamic teachings every Muslim in an Islamic state and society has the right to criticize over bad behavior and bad governance, especially when a government crosses the limitations of constitution or authority but this critique will be positive and will not be for negative. Because according to Islam the basic rule of cooperation is goodness.

Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

"وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ"

“And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty.”²⁶

The prophet (saw) gives a fundamental right a Muslim to speak against the Muslim over bad activities. Even the prophet (SAW) declare to it a great jihad. As we read the saying of the prophet(SAW).

The prophet (SAW) said:

"The best form of Jihad is to tell a word of truth to a tyrannical Ruler."²⁷

The prophet (SAW) said on other place in this way:

"If any one of you comes across an evil, he should try to stop it with his hand (using force), if he is not in a position to stop it with his hand then he should try to stop it by means of his tongue (meaning he should speak against it). If he is not even able to use his tongue then he should at least condemn it in his heart. This is the weakest degree of faith".²⁸

The Quran also differentiates the hypocrite men and a believer of Islam in this way.

Allah says in the Holy Quran:

"They enjoin what is proper and forbid what is improper"²⁹

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۖ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

In contrast, describing the qualities of a hypocrite, the Quran mentions:

الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ ۖ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمُنْكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ

"They bid what is improper and forbid what is proper".³⁰

Moulana Maududi said in these verses in Tafhimul Quran:

"This obligation of inviting people to righteousness and forbidding them to adopt the paths of evil is incumbent on all true Muslims. If any government deprives its citizens of this right, and prevents them from performing this duty, then it is in direct conflict with the injunction of God."³¹

Freedom of Religion:

This is also an important area of freedom of expression, which gives a person freedom of religion. Allah Almighty describes this important right in his sacred Book the Quran.

Allah says in the Holy Quran:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۚ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ

"There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taught and believes in Allah has grasped the most

trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.”³²

According to this verse there will not be any compulsion on a person to accept Islam. Islam gives him a freedom of religious conscience and conviction to it in an Islamic state and society.

According to *Sayed Moududi* :

“If somebody does not accept Islam, Muslims will have to recognize and respect his decision, and no moral, social or political pressure will be put on him to change his mind.”³³

According to Quran even the Muslims are forbidden to oppose the other religions.

Allah Almighty states in the Glorious Quran:

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ

“And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say, "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one; and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.”³⁴

The Holy Quran takes another bold step and gives order to a Muslim that he does not abuse their false Idols.

According the Holy Quran:

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

“And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus We have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return and He will inform them about what they used to do.”³⁵

These verses also make sure that Islam is a religion of Peace and did not spread by force. This is an invalid question from some so called *Orientalists* that Islam spread by force. The beautiful answered is given by a prominent Historian De Lacy O’Leary:

“History makes it clear however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myth that historians have ever repeated.”³⁶

So these clear evidences show that Islam is a religion of peace and gives entire freedom of religion to non believers.

Freedom of Thought:

Freedom of Thought or opinion is another most important type of freedom of Expression. Islam gives a right to everybody

in Islamic state that he describes his opinion according to his mind and heart. Even he has a right to differ from other in a special matter.

As Allah says in the Holy Quran:

فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ

" If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day"³⁷

This Quranic verse gives a freedom of opinion, even then it is differ from other but it should differ to the Shari'ah(Quran and Sunnah).

A scholar said about this Verse:

"Obviously this Quranic text anticipates the possibility of dispute arising between the Ruler and his subjects, and it affirms that the duty of obedience does not over rule the rights of citizens to take issue with their leaders and the Government."³⁸

Quran invites the people to free think about the God, universe and other sings of the Universe.

As Allah states in the Glorious Quran:

كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ

"Thus doth Allah make clear to you (His) Signs; that ye may consider"³⁹

It means this verse of Quran invites the people to investigate and explore the universe. In this way Quran gives a person a right to free opinion for search and spread of Truth.

According to an Islamic scholar Shafique Ali Khan:

"Freedom of thought means that person or a group of like-minded persons, associations or countries are naturally free to express , record, or observe any idea, feeling, thinking, and observation in a civilized or cultured style as permitted or admissible under the prevailing norms of law and ethics."⁴⁰

So, we can say Freedom of thought has a very close relation to the freedom of Expression because freedom of thought is base for freedom of expression.

Freedom of Association:

Quran gives a freedom of Association to a person for good purpose.

Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

“Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah.”⁴¹

Another place Allah clearly says to the Believers:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

"Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity."⁴²

Sayed Moududi says about these verses in his book about human rights:

“This clearly indicates that if the entire Muslim nation collectively begins to neglect its obligation to invite people to goodness and forbid them from doing evil then it is absolutely essential that it should contain at least a group of people which may perform this obligation.”⁴³

Freedom of association for peaceful purpose is an essential and integral part of human life.

As Allah says in the Holy Quran:

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا

“Hold fast together to the cable of Allah and be not divided.”

The prophet (SAW) also has guided his followers to this important duty.

As Prophet (SAW) said:

“The hand of Allah is with the Community.”⁴⁴

Hashim kamali says about this important right of human being:

“The right to peaceful association naturally follows as an integral part of freedom of speech and expression. The *Shari'ah* takes an affirmative stand on both of these rights and encourages association in pursuit of lawful objectives.”⁴⁵

These verses of Quran and Sayings of the Prophet (SAW) tell about freedom of opinion in Islamic perspective.

Freedom of consultation:

Freedom of consultation is an important right of a person in an Islamic society. The Holy Quran grants this essential human right. Even the prophet (SAW) also consulted upon his opinions. According to the Glorious Quran:

وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ

“And consult them in affairs (of moment)”⁴⁶

Allah tells about the approaches of the Holy Muhammad (SAW) and his companions in collective matters in Quran that they consulted their collective matters.

As Allah says in the Holy Quran:

وَأْمُرْهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ

“Who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation”.⁴⁷

Even the Prophet (SAW) himself consulted the important matters to his companions. As we read in the *Hadith* of prophet (SAW).

Hazrat Abu Hurairah narrates:

“I have not seen any one to more diligent in consulting the companions then the prophet (SAW) himself.”⁴⁸

Muhammad *Hasim Kamali* said about the importance of consultation:

“Being one of salient principle of the Government prescribed in the Quran, *Shura* requires the Head of state and Government leaders to conduct community affairs through consultations with community members.”⁴⁹

Freedom of free writings:

Islam gives right a person to free writings for social and religious interest. It is an important part of freedom of expression in this age because this is an age of writing and publishing. The first revelation of Quran is related to this right.

According to the Holy Quran:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ . خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ . اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ . الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ . عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ.

"Proclaim! (or read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created- Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful,- He Who taught (the use of) the pen.”⁵⁰

These verses of Quran and *Ahadith* of Prophet (SAW) tell us that free consultation is an important right of a person in an Islamic society.

According to the Holy Quran:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“And We have sent down unto thee (also) the Message; that thou *mayest* explain clearly to men what is sent for them, and that they may give thought.”⁵¹

Therefore, we also explore the details about right to freedom of expression in the light of Prophet *Sunnah* (SAW). Muslim scholars also describe this important issue in the details of human rights in Islam.

An important Issue is that Islam gives every kind of rights in its own style but some people try to explore then in the light of western thought which is not a true style and behavior.

As a Muslim Scholar Shafique Ali khan writes in his Book:

“The Islamic concept of thought cannot and should not be studied in the light of western ideas ...both the old and new. Islam being a unique ideology has its own standards of excellence truth and efficiency, right and wrong”⁵².

Freedom of speech:

Freedom of speech is also an important area of the freedom of expression. Quran gives the freedom speech to any person with some conditions and limitations.

As Allah Almighty states in the Quran:

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

“Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance.”⁵³

A renowned Muslim scholar said about the freedom of speech in Islam:

“According to Islam for freedom of speech there is a necessary to adopt a justice and right way which consists on wisdom and beautiful consultation otherwise it will be harmful to the society and human being.”⁵⁴

It means we should enjoy this freedom of speech with complete careful responsibility.

These are some important areas of right to freedom of Expression in *Quranic* teachings. Quran not only give freedom of expression but it also encourages the people for freedom of expression to explore and search the Truth. One thing is to keep in mind, Quran does not describe detail of anything but it provides some important principles and basic law about an Issue. The *Sunnah and Hadith* of Prophet (SAW) explain the matters which are described in the Quran because it is an essential duty of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Principles or limitations:

Islam is a religion of rights and duties. So, where Islam declares the human rights freely and voluntarily then it also bounds this freedom for public welfare, Because Islam and the Muslim *Ummah* is a justly balanced.

According to the Holy Quran:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

"Thus, have We made of you an *Ummat* justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves."⁵⁵

Consequently, for that purpose Quran give us some important principles. You can say Islam describes the limitations of freedom of expression.

Another notable issue is that Islamic human rights are not limitless due some reasons.

As Salman *Al-Haqeel* said:

"This is a special characteristic of Islamic Human Rights that they are not unlimited but they are limited to that they are not opposite to the objectives of Islamic *Shari'ah* and also side by side they are not opposite to the society which a man part of it."⁵⁶

According to me some important Quranic principles of freedom of expression are as follows:

To adopt fair speaking:

The first principle of Quran's freedom of expression is fair speaking:

Allah states in the Glorious Quran:

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

"And speak fairly to the People."⁵⁷

To adopt true speaking:

The second very important principle of Quranic freedom of expression is true speaking:

Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

"O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and say a word directed to the Right"⁵⁸

To avoid wrong speaking:

To avoid wrong speaking is also an important principle of freedom of expression:

As Allah describes in the Holy Quran:

وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ

“So avoid the *uncleanliness* of idols and avoid false statement.”⁵⁹

Forbids laughing at others:

Quran also forbids to laugh and hating at others in any case:

Allah says in the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونَ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّن نِّسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ

“O ye who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor let some women laugh at others: It may be that the (latter are better than the (former)).”⁶⁰

To avoid defame and sarcastic:

The forth very important principle of *Quranic* freedom of expression is to avoid defame and sarcastic to others.

According to the Holy Quran

وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأَسْمُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

"Nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames: Ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness, (to be used of one) after he has believed: And those who do not desist are (indeed) doing wrong."⁶¹

Avoid abusing any one:

Another important principle of *Quranic* freedom of expression is to avoid abuse to others especially in religious affairs.

According to the Glorious Quran:

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

“And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus We have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return and He will inform them about what they used to do.”⁶²

To Avid to religious conspiracy:

It is an important principle of *Quranic* freedom of expression to avoid religious conspiracy.

Allah says in the Holy Quran:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ طَقْد تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ

“There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong.”⁶³

To Avoid to Blasphemy:

According to Quran Blasphemy of Allah Prophets and Sacred Books is the biggest crime, so Quran forbids strictly from this bad activity.

According the Holy Quran:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا

"Those who annoy Allah and His Messenger - Allah have cursed them in this World and in the Hereafter, and have prepared for them a humiliating Punishment".⁶⁴

Good behavior in religious Debate

Quran also suggest his believers to adopt good behavior in religious debates.

Allah Almighty describes in the Holy Quran:

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُم

"And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them."⁶⁵

Avoid concealing the Truth (Haq):

Quran forbids concealing the Truth in any case.

Allah says in the Holy Quran:

وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكُنُوا لِلْحَقِّ وَالْحَقِّ أَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

"And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when ye know."⁶⁶

Avoid concealing the evidence:

Quran strictly forbids concealing the evidence. It is an important Quranic principle of freedom of expression.

Allah states in the Holy Quran:

وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آتَمَ قَلْبُهُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ

"Conceal not evidence; for whoever conceals it, - His heart is tainted with sin. And Allah Knoweth all that ye do."⁶⁷

To ascertain the truth before talking:

It is an important Quranic principle of conversation to ascertain the truth before talking to others.

As Allah says in the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَنْ تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

O ye who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest ye harm people unwittingly and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done.⁶⁸

To avoid publishing of evil:

Quran strictly forbids publishing of evil. So, it is an important Quranic principle of freedom of expression.

Allah states in the Holy Quran:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“Those who love (to see) scandal published broadcast among the Believers, will have a grievous Penalty in this life and in the Hereafter: Allah knows, and ye know not.”⁶⁹

Another place Allah describes in these words:

لَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا

“Allah loveth not that evil should be noised abroad in public speech, except where injustice hath been done; for Allah is He who heareth and knoweth all things.”⁷⁰

Do not pursue without knowledge:

It is also an important Quranic principle for freedom of expression that does not peruse anything without true knowledge.

As Allah says in the holy Quran:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

“And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).”⁷¹

Discourages of irrelevant questioning:

Quran forbids the irrelevant questions. This is an important principle of Quranic Freedom of expression.

As Allah says in the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَسْأَلُوا عَنْ أَشْيَاءَ إِنْ تُبَدَّ لَكُمْ تَسْؤُكُمْ وَإِنْ تَسْأَلُوا عَنْهَا حِينَ يُنَزَّلُ الْقُرْآنُ تُبَدَّ لَكُمْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهَا

O ye who believe! Ask not questions about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble. But if ye ask about things when the Qur'an is being revealed, they will be made plain to you, Allah will forgive those: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing.⁷²

According to me these are some important Quranic principles of freedom of expression. It means if Quran gives a right to free express their ideas, then it also describes its principles and limitations.

According to an Islamic scholar Dr. Mubasshir Nazir:

“Islam gives right to free speech for spread of goodness not for evil and this concept of freedom of expression is better then west.”⁷³

This is keeping in mind that the objective of expression in Islam is different from the west.

As Dr. Ismail Chine writes in his book Question on Islam:

“According to Islam freedom of expression is an important duty as well as a fundamental human right, for construction of society not for destruction.”⁷⁴

Free launce freedom of expression is not good even for speakers because every thing when exceeds its limitations loses its importance. The legal experts also talk to limit it.

As a renowned western scholar Cox Archibald said:

“Liberty of expression benefits more then the speakers’ .the hearer and reader suffer a violation of their spiritual liberty, if they are denied access to the ideas of others”.⁷⁵

Islam does not ban the freedom of expression for some important objectives and benefits.

As Dr. Abdul Hakeem Hassan said:

“Islam did not implement an uncontrolled freedom of expression, even in the sedition and anarchy, but Islam has given some principles and limits for the freedom of expression.”⁷⁶

The above Quranic principles are also boundaries and limitations of freedom of expression in Quran. Therefore, if we wish for a peaceful and humble society then it is necessary to adopt these universal principles of Quran during conversation and writings.

Conclusion:

Islam is a religion of human rights because it discusses the social issues. All prophets were sent to the different societies and nations, not in space. Consequently Islam is a social religion which presents the solution of social problems. An important issue is that the Islamic human rights are not given by emperor or reformer; these are given by the Creator of all Mankind, Allah Almighty, so we see a kind of balance in Rights and duties. The third important thing is that the West tries to gets the reward of any issue itself. As we see in the human rights, the Western scholars say we are pioneers of Human Rights but the reality is not so. Quran gave the human rights before fourteen hundreds years ago while the UNO and West declared the human rights in 1948. In this perspective Quran appeals to society because, Quran is closely related to social issues of human kind because Quran grants the

freedom of expression due to; human dignity and honor exploring of truth. Quran considers the freedom of expression as a fundamental human right. This should also be keeping in mind, Quran does not support the absolute freedom of expression but describes its limits and principles for social betterment. So, we should adopt the Quranic principles of conversation, for a peaceful and humble society.

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³ Al-Quran 22:30

⁴ Al-Quran 33:70

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