Utilization of Media in Establishing the Image of Islam as a Religion of Peace

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Abstract: Nowadays media is not merely the source of communication but also a source of revolution. It is capable of bringing about huge changes in the society as well as in the world. Media has a power to run through the mindset of human being and remold it thoroughly. The audience of present era does not only want information from media but also expect to be able to choose what they read. They are no more only passive gainer of information but also actively contribute the contents and opinions. Since media, having its different forms like TV, radio, newspaper, internet and nowadays social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. have so much of impact on public that they tend to believe each and everything they get through it. We cannot deny the fact that the media is the fourth pillar of the democratic world and its key factors are transparency and honesty; still, it is impossible to conjecture that media is made up of completely unbiased information and that the media companies do not impose their own control upon the information being supplied to media users. It is the media which has figured every man with long beard is a terrorist. In the contemporary world where Muslims are misunderstood as a terrorist and Islam as the religion of producing such fundamentalists, media is the only tool which can be used to enlighten the truth about Islam and Muslims. It is the duty of media to show both the sides of a coin but unfortunately some of the media sectors are misusing the power and trying to destroy the real identity of Islam. In the proposed paper I would like to study and discuss the utilization of this weapon called media in establishing the image of Islam as a religion of peace.

Key Words: Media, Information, Religion of peace, Fourth pillar, Contribute, misunderstood.

Media is considered as the mirror of the society; but, the present media can be considered as the manipulated mirror of the society. Modern societies could not be imagined without mass communication. Mass media, now a day, is not only the need of the democratic world but the necessity; thus it is the best medium to control the perception of the mass as a whole. Media has always been the best tool to bring revolution so is today, but unfortunately, in the present era it is mostly used to politicize the things. For the non-Muslim countries media is the best way to convey people that Islam is the religion that supports war, Jihad means killing innocent people, and Muslims are the cruelest creature of the Almighty. Although, we as a Muslim know that it is not the fact.

In spite of knowing the truth we could not change the produced perception about Islam as the religion of war and Muslims as the terrorist just because we lack the most powerful and effective weapon called media. We hardly have any media channel which depicts the real picture of Islam that tells us to live with love and harmony, that teaches us to keep patience for everything as it says in Quran "InnalLaha Maas Saberin" (Allah is along with those who keep patience), the religion that tells us to feed the hungry neighbors before we eat, the religion which has the provision of helping the poor of the society in the form of zakat. Many of the non-Muslims scarcely know about these sides of Islam which also includes putting emphasis on education the most,as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: ***"The seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim."*** – ***(Tirmidhi, Hadith 74).***The Prophet (PBUH) also said: ***"Acquire knowledge and impart it to the people."*** – ***(SunanTirmidhi, Hadith 107)***

We know that media is much more than providing information and entertainment; it is an instrument of and emblem for democracy. It is a platform that provides freedom of expression which is the core of a healthy media as well as a fundamental human right. Self-directing, independent and liberalist media provide a stage for debate and different opinions. At the same time some media companies are misused for propaganda purposes, to provoke hatred and spread rumours to artificially create tensions. Lack of information makes people anguished,

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anxious, tensed and easy to manipulate. Let me ask one question, how many media companies are owned by Muslim community? All those things that are shown in news channels or in the other media companies hardly have any understanding of Islam. The problem with Muslims is that we don't have this platform in our hand so that we can reach to the heart and mind of general public and tell them what Islam really is.

I belong to India and I noticed, there are number of channels which are devoted to Hindu religion but the channels devoted to Islam are countable on fingers. Even those channels which are specifically Islamic they too have the programs that are designed for Muslims and the traditional gossips and speeches go on there. I am not saying that we should not have it but I want to stress on the point that our purpose should be to make the mass in general know about Islam as it is. So far there is only one channel I came across with which is really working towards explaining Quran, the meaning of the Quranic verses along with its context and the real purpose of Islam. They often have healthy comparative discussions with the scholars of the other religions too. We need innumerable numbers of such media channels to provide correct knowledge about Islam.

I would like to share one incident of my life. When I was working in one of the local media channel as a news reader and program anchor, I came across with a man who always used to be terrified with Muslims. Initially he used not to talk to me. Once when I invited all my colleagues to my home on the occasion of Eid, he bluntly said "I cannot go to Muslim area". He continued saying "My parents have warned me to make friendship with any Muslim because they are dangerous people". I was stunned listening to all these. Although later he was convinced that Muslims are not that bad but his perception about Muslims in the still haunts me. On one hand, I as a Muslim know much about Mahabharata, Geeta and Ramayana because in our childhood we watched such programs in Television. On the other hand, the Hindus know nothing about Islam and Quran because they know only what they have heard from their ignorant ancestors or what they see in Television or in other social media apps where Islam is always negatively characterized. They don't know who Prophet Muhammad(PBUH) actually is. Although Prophet Muhammad(PBUH) is the real example of the perfect human being sent by the Almighty Allah to usher the other human beings the correct path of life,but they have never heard any stories about him because we Muslims have never tried to come out of the box and tell the world about stories and the messages of Prophet Muhammad(PBUH) in a way that attracts the non-Muslims. Contrarily Ram and Krishana, who are an imaginary character of Kalidaasareeminent.

Let's just talk about Jihad, What is Jihad? I think Jihad is the most misunderstood concept of Islam. And this misconception is produced and spread by media undoubtedly. In a narration, Auf Bin Malik said, *"O Prophet of Allah, do you recommend that we fight the ruler?" He said, "No, don't fight them as long as they do not prevent you from your prayers. And if you see from them something that you dislike, dislike their acts, do not dislike them. And do not take your hand out from obedience to them."*Bukhari and Muslim narrated from Abdullah IbnAl-Abbas, *"If someone dislikes his ruler, he must be patient, because if he comes against the ruler in a rebellious or destructive manner by only a hand span and dies, he dies in a state of pre-Islamic ignorance (jahiliyyah) and sin."*

These source texts affirms that whoever lives under a particular government must obey the ruler and live peacefully. They are prohibited from taking up arms against him. Uprising or violence by any group against the ruler is completely rejected in Islam, and was prohibited by the Prophet Muhammad(PBUH) and will be a cause of death on the way of ignorance (jahiliyya). Thus Islam considers rebellion against the ruler a great iniquity. These hadith affirm that one must be patient with one's ruler, even if he commits oppression. These hadith refer to the leader of a nation, not the leader of a small group. Therefore groups that take up violent struggle against their regimes are prohibited in Islam and are by default illegal and blameworthy.

In fact the true path to correction of the mistakes of a ruler is according to the hadith *"The most excellent Jihad is when one speaks a word of truth in the presence of a tyrannical ruler."*(Narrated by Abu Said al-Khudri in Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi.)Note here the hadith does not mention fighting the ruler, but rather praises the one who corrects the ruler by speech. Armed and violent opposition to a state regime can never be recognized as Jihad in the way of Allah, despite the claims of many groups. Unfortunately this veracity of Jihad has never been shown in any of the media channels. Rather Jihad has been declared by media as the war against all the non-Muslims to force them to accept Islam. It is the media which has proclaimed that all the practicing Muslims with long beard could be a terrorist or "Jihadi" who is able to kill innocent people anywhere anytime. Even the non-Muslim children hate Muslims because of this.Wherever any attacks or blasts happen media proves that the attacker was Muslim. They give some fake and lame evidences such as something written in Urdu or Arabic is found in the pocket of the attacker so he is considered to be Muslim and he is declared as terrorist, contrary, if the attacker is non-Muslim then he is called a lone wolf. It is the bitter fact that Islam is the targeted religion for media.

We, the Muslims, need to change this wrong mindset of people. We need to tell them that it is not Islam which is terrorizing the world. It is some group of anti-social selfish people who, in the name of Islam, performing such ferocious act to fulfill their own needs. We need to emphasize the teaching of Islam which says Allah is one and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is His last messenger. It talks about peace, forgiveness, patience,

charity and love to humanity. In Holy Quran Chapter 24 surah Nur, Allah Almighty says*: ". . . And let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful." (Quran 24:22).* In this ayah we are given the greatest motivation to push ourselves to forgive; it's Allah's forgiveness. This is the real Islam and it is the responsibility of Muslim world to counter the fabricated version of Islam and portray the real picture of it with the use of media.

REFERENCE

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[3]. Sahih Muslim. Other hadiths with similar purport are: 1) "There will be upon you leaders who you will recognize and disapprove of; whoever rejects them is free, whoever hates them is safe as opposed to those who are pleased and obey them", they said, "should we not fight them". He r said, "No, as long as they pray." 2)"The best of your leaders are those you love and they love you, you pray for them and they pray for you. The worst of your leaders are those who anger you and you anger them and you curse them and they curse you. He said we replied, "O Messenger of Allah r should we not remove them at that?" He r said, "No, as long as they establish the prayer amongst you."