

## WESTERN CONCEPT OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION (AN ANALYSIS IN ISLAMIC CONTEXT)

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### **Abstract:**

This study elaborates western concept of freedom of expression and speech and carries out analysis in the light of Islamic perspective in modern Islamic socio-political context. The Western thought recognizes freedom of speech as a key value to human rights and civil liberties. They also have different standards of application in limiting or delimiting the freedom of speech and expression. The West perceives that Freedom of expression is the first and last trench in the protection of other liberties and rights by governance based on Secularism. Islam also preserves and protects the right of freedom of expression and speech but within some moral, legal and social norms in the interest of society. This is the basic difference between Islamic and Western understanding of freedom of expression. It is being witnessed that the western concept of freedom of expression is fast creeping into Muslim societies in the garb of misinterpretation of the Islamic principles of freedom, thus we need to understand the Western thought on freedom to counter it through Islamic concept to avoid its negative impact on Muslim societies. Descriptive and analytical approaches have been adopted in this study with qualitative research methodology.

**Keywords:** Western Understanding, Freedom of Expression, Analytical Study, Islamic Context

### **Introduction:**

The Western thoughts on freedom recognize freedom of speech as a key to human value that ensures liberties. Though they favor freedom as the most sacred of their values, they also have differences of opinion in limiting or delimiting freedom of speech. Some of the scholars are of the opinion to limit the notion through moral and legal authorities, but the majority of Western scholars oppose to restrict or regulate the freedom of expression. They consider it a firm base for other civil rights and liberties. Anderson remarks on a historical petition: "Freedom of expression is the first and last trench in the protection of liberty. All the rights affirmed by the New Zealand Bill of Rights<sup>1</sup> Acts are protected by that particular right".<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in all over the West and America specifically and commonly in the rest of the world the right to freedom of expression is

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protected by many national and international laws and conventions. The issue of cartoons hurting the Muslims' faith and emotion brought the freedom of expression in debate among the Muslims and West. The West wants to base its discussions on cartoons on the concepts of secularism, "freedom of speech" and "freedom of the press". The Muslims representatives on the Western channels are also acknowledging "freedom of speech" as a sacred and fundamental thought in their protest statements. They have been urging the use of this "freedom" responsibly and complaining to the West that it is not a good practice to spread religious hatred through the freedom of speech. We will endeavor to have a look at the concept of freedom and equality in the west and carry out its analysis from Islamic perspective of freedom.

### **Understanding of Western Concept Freedom of Expression:**

When Europe was liberated from the tyrannical nexus of the pope and the king, the resultant political and intellectual vacuum was filled by European thinkers and philosophers with a new ideology, based on the separation of religion and the world (secularism) and the freedom and equality of man. This slogan of freedom is faulty, as one person cannot be absolutely free. One person's freedom restricts another's freedom, thus any kind of restriction, when imposed on liberties, freedom is no more. The above-mentioned feeling of invalidity and impracticality of the "beautiful" concept of liberties was also felt by the Western thinkers of the time, but they began to limit absolute freedom in order to make this impractical concept relatively viable. The German thinker Immanuel Kant said that freedom "I am free to move my hand, but where your nose begins, the freedom of my hand ends." So instead of absolute freedoms, laws were made with limits and restrictions, but all these laws were marketed in the name of freedom and equality. Thus the concept of secularism and liberties logically and practically accepted the political system of democracy. That is why whenever the existence or non-existence of democracy is mentioned in any country, the question of the existence or non-existence of freedom must be considered.

We observe many serious differences on the basic idea of freedom in the Western context. According to the Encyclopedia of the Field Enterprises;

“The word freedom does not have the same meaning worldwide. For example, in Europe and America today, freedom generally means people have certain political rights. In India under the influence of oriental philosophy,

usually freedom means freedom from desire and morally, freedom means an ability to choose between right and wrong and legally the freedom means liberty in the circle of laws".<sup>3</sup>

The issue of blasphemy, too, is viewed in the West is also viewed on the basis of Western concept of "freedom of speech" and they tend to drag Muslims into the intellectual debate thus the Islamic injunctions on blasphemy are seen through the lens of freedom of speech. Therefore, it is very important to understand the western concept of freedom of expression from Islamic perspective to respond to the threat of Western thought to the Muslims in the allure of democracy and freedom. This paper analyses the same through study of Western concept and Islamic perspective on these freedoms.

It is like a complement that the research does not find any fundamental similarity on account of the definitions of the term freedom of expression in the books of the Western political and social thought. Different scholars of the West define the term freedom of expression or speech in different ways due to their political, social, legal and moral affiliations and perspectives. Every scholar and school of thought understands freedom of expression in its specific scope. In the upcoming discussion, however, to present the view of the Western thought we will try to define the term freedom of expression in Western perspective. The New World Encyclopedia defines freedom of expression in this way;

"Freedom of speech is the capability to speak without any restriction. Also called ``freedom of expression, it refers not only to oral speech but any act of corresponding information or ideas including publications broadcasting, advertising, film and the internet".<sup>4</sup>

The Black's Law Dictionary expresses the meaning of freedom of speech in this way, "Freedom accorded by the constitution or laws of the state to express opinions and facts by word of mouth uncontrolled by any censorship or restriction of government".<sup>5</sup> John Stuart Mill defines the freedom of expression likewise; "In the West, freedom of expression means to say what you like, to criticize the authorities, and to discuss ideas openly and without fear, is agreed to be of fundamental importance. When there is less agreement about it when this freedom may be properly curtailed?".<sup>6</sup>

The above mentioned definition equally focused that the freedom of expression should be with minimum limits or without restrictions. Thus,

in the contemporary Western famous discourse, any limits or control to freedom is considered as its negative perspective. The study feels that after and during the beginning of the Renaissance movement in Europe the negative concept of liberty has become dominant but after renaissance the positive trend of freedom became dominant due to change in modern Western thought. Therefore, the Encyclopedia Americana states this fact in this way;

“From the 16<sup>th</sup> Century onward Liberty has been considered mainly in its negative concept as opposition to authoritarianism and restraints in Religion, Government and Economics”.<sup>7</sup>

The above discussion presents the variety of definitions regarding freedom of expression in Western perspective. In these definitions there are two points of views presented, on the one hand, there are the philosophers, who want limitless freedom of expression and do not accept any kind of moral, legal and social censorship. Although a group of the Western scholars wants to limit the freedom of expression for the sake of state and society, the majority of Western scholars like and propagate the freelance and unlimited theory of freedom of expression, although practically it is not possible anywhere in the world even in the West. This means that every country, state, society and religion has or should establish some reasonable limits on freedom of speech otherwise it is difficult to manage the socio-political, moral and socio-religious issues. In the following paragraphs, we will try to elaborate some important aspects of freedom of expression to understand different types and areas in Western context.

### **Major Aspects of the Western Freedom of Expression:**

The Western thought also has a huge variety of freedom of expression and its related areas. According to the Encyclopedia of Philosophy; “Freedom in the abstract is a class comprising many species freedom of thought and speech, freedom of association , freedom of assembly, freedom of worship, freedom of movement, freedom in the use or disposal of property, freedom in the choice of one’s employer or occupation and so on”.<sup>8</sup> The Roget’s Thesaurus of Words and Phrases divides the term freedom as; “Liberty, being at large freedom of action, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of press and academic freedom etc.”<sup>9</sup> This term is also described as four freedoms. Many scholars of the Western thought derived and discussed various other

types and areas of freedom and freedom of expression. This variety of freedom helps us to understand the basic concept and the stance of the Western freedom and freedom of expression.

**Freedom of Religion and Beliefs:** Freedom of Religion is another most vital area of the freedom of expression in contemporary Western thought. Every prominent Western scholar of this field discusses and considers it as the most significant value of the Western thought. The International laws and conventions protect this important human right, although they differ in the definition of religion. According to Harvard Law Journal; “Many international and regional human rights instruments guarantee rights related to freedom of religion or belief, for none attempts to define the term Religion”.<sup>10</sup> The British law also considers the freedom of religion as a key right of a person. In the Western laws and thought, the religion is a completely private and personal issue and the purpose to promote the freedom of religion is to achieve peace and stability in the society. According to the report, “The liberty of faith or conviction is often vital to peace in society.”<sup>11</sup>

The Western thought believes in the privatization of religion from a collective clutch. Therefore, in the Western thought and laws, the personal and individual issue regarding religion and its freedom is dominant. According to the Encyclopedia;

“Freedom of Religion, in the broadest sense, means the right of each person to worship according to his own convictions. Freedom of religion also includes the right of an individual not to worship at all, if he so chooses”.<sup>12</sup>

All the international conventions and declarations also grant the freedom of religion. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, Article 18 of UDHR, defines freedom of religion and belief as below;

“Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, this right includes the freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance”.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, the American constitution (which is considered as one of the most prominent constitutions for fundamental rights and civil liberties in human history) also protects the right to freedom of religion in the first Amendment of 1791. It was silent regarding even some fundamental rights

and liberties so the first Amendment was done in the constitution. The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)<sup>14</sup> grants and protects freedom of religion;

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance”.<sup>15</sup>

The European Convention on Human Rights limits the freedom of religion through law. As we read in Section II of the Article, “Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and liberties of the others”.<sup>16</sup> Although, the tradition of religious freedom has not been strengthened in Christianity but after the Renaissance when religion became a personal issue, their thought also changed and now they consider it as fundamental human right. According to the New Catholic Encyclopedia the freedom of Religion means, “It solemnly proclaims that all men and all religious communities have a strict right to religious freedom: a right that is based on the dignity of human that praises contemporary legal systems that recognize and uphold this right and deplore the fact that in many countries it is infringed”.<sup>17</sup>

From the above conversation, the study examines that the freedom of religion in the Western history was not easy at all. The West has a long history to get all the kinds of freedoms including freedom of religion and expression. Practically, they were able to avail freedom after separation of the Church and the State after the Renaissance movement in Europe (The West).

**Freedom of Speech and Discussion:** The most important and vital feature of contemporary Western thought is to consider the freedom of speech and discussion as a fundamental human right. It is from one of the four imperative forms of freedom of the West. Many Western scholars try to promote and write about this important Western value. Even some prominent Western scholars devoted their lives to promote and protect this freedom. There are hundreds of examples which can be seen on social media in the shape of blogs, comments, posts, documentaries, videos and audios about the defamation of religions, religious

communities and religious personalities. The recent display of cartoons in France during the month of birth of the Prophet of Islam, under the patronage of Government reflects the indifference of West to the emotions of Muslims. To Muslims, it is a contempt and blasphemy but to the modern Western approach it is a fundamental human right. According to Thomas Scanlon's theory of free expression; "Liberty of expression benefits more than the speakers. The hearer and reader suffer a violation of their spiritual liberty if they are denied access to the ideas of others".<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, some Western scholars consider it the road to salvation. As Archibald Cox states in his famous book; "When first considered, freedom of speech and Press chiefly meant opportunity to hear and read the word of God and thus to discover the road to salvation".<sup>19</sup>

In general words, the freedom of speech and discussion means that you can say what you want without any sanction or in other words you can express your point of view without any fear and interruption. English lexicon tells the similarity between freedom of expression and press in the West as well as it tells that the freedom of expression including freedom of information and press should be free from any kind of government's sanctions and limits. This statement gives a clue to public demands for absolute freedom of expression.

**Freedom of Thought and Conscience:** Freedom of thought and conscience is another more important liberty in the Western perspective. Most of Western scholars consider it the base of every freedom because if you have no freedom to think, then how can you express and write your ideas. JS Bury writes, "It is unsatisfactory and even painful to thinkers, if they are not permitted to communicate their thoughts to others".<sup>20</sup> In contemporary Western thought, this is a vital freedom and legal right. Professor Renucci, Jean-François stated its importance in a more clear way;

"Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is a fundamental right, enshrined not only in the European Convention on Human Rights but also in many national, international and European instruments. It is a basic right that is extremely important".<sup>21</sup>

In the modern era any legal or sociopolitical body cannot ignore the liberty and right to freedom of expression and thought. This liberty is provided through every means of legal and political forums and

instruments. Even many of the Western legal instruments consider it mother of all rights and liberties.

The most influential voice regarding freedom in the Western history is of John Milton and John Locke. As the encyclopedia of Americana explains, "The value of untrammelled speech for intellectual freedom has been celebrated by philosophers, poets and jurists, but perhaps by no one more eloquent than John Milton (*Areopagitica*-1644), John Locke (*Toleration*-1689) and Stuart Mill (*On liberty*-1859)".<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, they are more sensitive and sometimes crazy towards human rights and civil liberties. But sometimes their sensitivity creates problems for other words because for protection of their right, they go beyond the limits of freedom which violates other fundamental human rights and is not the true sense of freedom.

**Freedom of the Press and Right to Information:** Freedom of the press and right to get information are the most vital and sensitive civil liberties in the contemporary Western socio political perspective. Freedom of press is one of the crucial issues in modern Western politics. Although the press in the West is not completely free, the discussion regarding free press is free. Differences in the understanding of press freedom exist, e.g. even among the European democracies and the USA".<sup>23</sup> In the contemporary world, it has become the universal sign of freedom. According to a research article; "Regardless of the ideological differences in the various socio-political systems of the world, press freedom -a logical extension of man's inalienable freedom of expression today is a universal phenomenon".<sup>24</sup> According to many contemporary Western scholars' views, the freedom of the press can play a vital role in the development of human beings.

In general, the freedom of press means the publication and receiving of facts and information for the goodness of society without restraint of any authority. This academic discussion shows that freedom of press is protected through various laws, constitutions, conventions and authorities in all over the Western World.

**Academic or Intellectual Freedom:** Academic or intellectual freedom is also considered as a key freedom and most important right in the Western contemporary socio political perspective. Academic freedom is necessary because it academically nourishes thought and civilization. Although in all thoughts, the scholars have been struggling regarding this precious human right from the beginning of modern human history but did not succeed completely. The research study of Mathew



Franken and Robert Post discloses this issue very beautifully; “Throughout civilized human existence, there have been ideas that cannot be expressed questions that cannot be asked lest civil or ecclesiastical authority be offended or threatened”.<sup>25</sup>

**Freedom of Criticism:** Criticism is another important value of contemporary Western thought. According to the Western scholar’s comments, social criticism plays an important role in the development of society. Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences describes this claim; “The development of human society has been conditioned by social criticism, which is defending or attacking the status quo postponed or accelerated change”.<sup>26</sup> Freedom of religious criticism helps to change the myths under the banner of religion, “With this freedom comes the right to challenge orthodox religious ideas”.<sup>27</sup> Although some Western scholars search out the roots of religious and political criticism in Greco-Roman thought but it is not true. The freedom of criticism is a modern phenomenon and began during the Reformation movement after the clash of Church with civil rights and liberties.

Although, freedom of expression and criticism is an important liberty in contemporary Western thought but it can also be availed in the legal premises. A Western scholar, Herman Von writes; “Scholars must be free to debate any controversial matter, as long as the debate fulfills the Academic requirement -so long, that is, as the discussion proceeds on the basis of scholarly standards”.<sup>28</sup> This means automatically, you have no absolute freedom of criticism in the West as their freedom fighters scholars claim.

**Freedom of Consultation (Voting):** Freedom of consultation, right to vote or democracy is considered another significant liberty and value of contemporary Western thought. Especially after the reformation of democracy and freedom of expression both have become the most essential part to each other in the contemporary Western social and political system. According to a US official publication;

“Freedom and democracy are often used interchangeably, but the two are not synonyms. Democracy is indeed a set of ideas and principles about freedom, but it also consists of practices and procedures that have been molded through a long, often tortuous history. Democracy is the institutionalization of freedom”.<sup>29</sup>

Now in the Western countries the freedom of consultation or right to vote has become the fundamental human right and essential civil liberty.

In Western countries there have been a lot of legislations that ensure the right of freedom of expression, speech and press, hence, even according to the law, dismissing or prohibition of this right is a punishable crime. Every modern constitution and many international declarations of the West accept and protect the right to vote and consultation.

These are some important areas of the Western freedom of expression. In number and names these freedoms seem likely to the Islamic areas but there is a lot of difference between both because the Western freedoms are achieved after a long struggle and as well as these freedoms have maximum tendency to absoluteness but the Islamic freedoms are granted by Allah and have some reasonable limits which have tendency to restrictions.

### **Analysis of Freedom in Islamic Context:**

Freedom of expression is a new and little bit contentious phenomenon in the light of Islamic perspective, however, we find enjoying equal importance in the contemporary Islamic and the Western sociopolitical context. The concept and teachings about freedom of thought and expression have been found throughout the Islamic history. In western perspective the concept of freedom of expression was introduced during the renaissance movement and it has become the most significant and obligatory part of western legal and social discourse. In modern Muslim countries and contemporary Islamic thought also considers it an important right. Although their scope of appreciation is different, both thoughts equally recognize the issue of freedom of expression and its relevant areas and aspects. It is also a considerable issue that Islamic and the Western significance regarding freedom of expression are different. Islam gives importance to this fundamental human right due to human dignity and honor, to spread and search for truth etc. Therefore, it is proven fact that one of the most significant objectives of the free expression in Islam is protection of human dignity. Therefore, Islamic scholars give high protection and appreciation about the dignity of man under teachings of the Holy Qur'an. "Here it is frequently read and learnt that in Islam personal dignity is observed as basic and unchallengeable right, which is widespread and indispensable for human life. Even it cannot be challenged and changed in any course of the Islamic tradition." <sup>30</sup>

Moreover, the Muslims are not free to be holding the evil of the rulers accountable, as it is the Shari'ah duty of a Muslim to raise the voice

against every evil that happens in society. He is exempt only if he is unable to raise his voice. As per Hadith ``Whoever of you sees an wrongdoing, he should try to change it with his hand, and if he cannot afford it, then he should express opposition with the tongue (for change) and if he cannot do it, then hate the act in the heart (change through idea)''<sup>31</sup> and the last one is the weakest level of faith. On the contrary, under freedom of speech, a person is free to remain completely silent against evil, even if he has the ability to stop it. Similarly, in Islam, slandering a chaste woman is a crime punishable by 80 lashes, while in liberal societies such slander is considered a source of cheap fame. Freedom of speech demands the Muslims that they should have no objection to the publication and promotion of works like that of Salman Rushdie. Thus, it became clear that all "western freedoms", especially freedom of expression have no place in Islam. Some people say that there are freedoms in Islam, but within the scope of its commandments where human actions are restricted under Islamic injunctions. Secondly, nowhere in the Quran and Hadith, the man is called free, nor are freedoms considered sacred. Thirdly, the term freedom cannot be used in conjunction with the prefixes and suffixes of "Islamic liberties" or "liberties under Islam." When we say that we also believe in liberties, it would be a blatant mistake, because even if we were to redefine these liberties, to say so would be tantamount to promoting the standards and criteria of disbelief and creating public opinion in its favor.

Thus, all Western terms that have specific meanings and demands and are in conflict with the tenets of Islam, such as liberties, basic human rights, social justice, democracy, etc., cannot be used by Muslims in literal sense. As we have argued before, the West desperately needed principles such as liberties and equality because it had no source to legislate after the Church was dismissed, discarding divine guidance. But Muslims do not need these hollow concepts of freedoms because they have the sources given by them, i.e the Qur'an and Sunnah. Therefore, Muslims must examine the incidents of blasphemy and apostasy on the basis of Islamic sources and refuse to look at these incidents through the lens of "liberties" by the West.

As far as dialogue with the West is concerned, we have two options in this regard. First of all, the West should be invited to use the Qur'an and Sunnah as a criterion to discuss this issue and bring evidence from the Qur'an and Sunnah in its defense of issues related to Muslims. They will certainly refuse to do, then the other way is to invite the West to use the

intellect and find an intellectual basis and a test that meets the principles of the intellect, acceptable to the parties. Since the notions of freedom and equality emanating from Secularism are the intellectual test for the West, it is now the responsibility of the West to prove them first through rational arguments. The fact is that in the basic beliefs, Islam invites man to use his intellect and to think and reason.

**Principles of Freedom and their Application:** We have discussed that all the forms of freedoms really did not exist in the West. Before, we see whether these freedoms come from the Qur'an and Sunnah or these concepts are completely contrary to Islam, Qur'a'n says, "speak to people good (words)"<sup>32</sup>. This negates the Western concept of freedom of expression, which has no concern to the damage caused to a party by the expression of other party. The Holy Prophet ﷺ gave a golden principle of life by saying, "Muslim is the one, from whom the other Muslims are not harmed in any manner".<sup>33</sup> This is such a wholesome concept of establishing a peaceful society. Similarly, Qur'a'n demands believers to avoid falsehood, "Avoid false statements".<sup>34</sup> Thus, these two leading principles governing Islamic concept of freedom of expression; telling truth and avoid harm to others, negate the Western thought on freedom of expression, where everything said or written, whether true or false, irrespective of its impact on other fellow beings, is allowed and protected under the concept of freedom and freedom of expression. Third universal concept of equality is given by the Prophet ﷺ, who said, "O mankind, your Lord is One and your father is one. You all descended from Aadam, and Aadam was created from earth. He is most honored among you in the sight of God who is most upright. No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, no colored person to a white person, or a white person to a colored person except by Taqwa (piety)".<sup>35</sup> On the contrary, the concept is selectively applied in the West against their own laid down norms of freedom, and violated in the stated interests and objectives of their own. Disallowing Azaan (call for prayers) and Parda (veil) is common violation of the concept, while speaking against Holocaust is termed as a crime, overriding the freedom of expression. Thus, one may ask the West whether there are freedoms in any country in the West. Is a Muslim free in the presence of Patriot Law in a country like America? Does a Muslim woman in France have the freedom to wear the veil in public school in the name of religious and personal freedom? What is the reason that every sacred entity of Muslims can be slandered, but speaking out against the state of Israel is considered anti-Semitic? The question arises that if

liberties are not meant to be applied equally and rather used as an excuse to whip Islam. If these freedoms are virtually non-existent in the Western countries, then how in the name of democracy, the Muslims can be pressurized for the liberties that virtually lead to demeaning of our own values. By declaring these universal, they were not only be spread all over the world, but also legislated in Muslim countries to change the whole society on their basis. We have experienced the recent debate on women freedom in Pakistan on Women Day, which demonstrated total ignorance of Islamic perspective of freedom and blind following of the Western thought.

**False Interpretations and Confusions:** In Muslim countries, the western thoughts on freedom of opinion, freedom of property, personal freedom and freedom of religion were disguised to be Islamic ideas. When the Muslims accepted these ideas as Islamic, the West began to present Islam as "defective" and "unnatural" on the basis of these criteria. For example, the West first draws on the concept of "La Ikrah fi al-Din" and equates it with the infidel thought of "freedom of religion" and then sanctifies the concept of "freedom of religion" and puts Islam to this false test. Thus, human rights organizations teach us that according to freedom of religion, if a Muslim voluntarily converts, then punishing him as an apostate is against the "universal" and "natural" law for "freedom of religion". Thus, the West and its intellectual slaves, the modernists, urge Muslims to "reform" their religion through "ijtihad". In the same way, the concept of equality between men and women (equality) is first presented to us as Islamic through false arguments. When the people accept this concept as Islamic, then based on this infidel concept, arrows of satire and ridicule are fired at Islam.

**Legal and Moral Injunctions:** Let us now take a closer look at the four freedoms that give rise to all other freedoms and which are the basis and source for legislation in the capitalist system. This thinking is in fact a product of the idea that all religions are based on blind faith, so one does not have superiority over the other. Therefore, according to the concept of religious freedom, a person is not only allowed to practice his or her religion, but he or she is also free to change his or her religion whenever he or she wants and then carry on with the activities in relation to new faith with impunity. Secularists declared all these thoughts to be in accordance with the Shari'ah and tried to bracket them under the phrase "La Ikrahafil-Din". However, the real meaning of La Ikrahafil-Din is only that no non-Muslim should be forcibly converted to Islam. Nor does this

compulsion apply to a Muslim who changes his religion and becomes a kaafir(disbeliever) whenever he wants. The Prophet ﷺ said :) "Whoever changes his religion, kill him."<sup>36</sup> Islam does not take hesitate in calling erroneous beliefs as wrong, but sometimes adopts a very strict attitude. It is also worth noting that the difference between the Islamic faith and all other beliefs is that the Islamic faith can be proved rationally, while all other religions do not allow the use of reason in the faith. As far as freedom of speech is concerned, the West has resorted to misuse of Islam to make this concept acceptable to Muslims. They justified the Islamic injunctions for freedom of expression by simply holding the rulers accountable and allowing political and jurisprudential differences of opinion. Even today, pro-freedom Muslims are frequently repeating the story of Hazrat Umar ibn al-Khattab RA, in which the Companions strictly inquired about his shirt. But it is limited to the concept of freedom of speech in relation to the accountability of the rulers. Scholars know that Freedom of Expression means that every human being has the right to say anything true or false. Today, the rapidly expanding pornography industry in the West is also protected under the principles of freedom of expression and personal freedom (unfortunately, pornography is also an industry in the eyes of the West). On the contrary, in Islam, a Muslim has the right to express his opinion if his opinion is derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah or anything which Islam does not consider haram, even if his opinion is against the authorized opinion of the caliph or the majority of Muslims do not disagree with his opinion. The rules of accountability of the rulers in Islam are not in consonance with Western freedom of speech.

**Myth of Secularism:** Secularism governs all the socio-political thoughts in the West, where intellect is supreme and free from any external (divine) guidance. When we examine the thinking of secularism on the basis of reason, we find that this belief is not based on rational arguments but on a compromise. Instead of proving by reason the fact that there is a creator of this universe and man or not, the doctrine of secularism urges us to ignore this debate under the principle of "freedom".

**Rationality:** When we look at the cartoons and incidents of apostasy through the lens of Islam and there is no place for Western and infidel ideas of freedom and equality as a criterion. Also, instead of discussing these minor issues with the West, Muslims should have a rational dialogue with them on their beliefs and intellectual criteria so that they can correct the basis of their thinking. Muslims should look at cartoons

and incidents of apostasy through the lens of Islam and refuse to use Western and infidel ideas of freedom and equality as a criterion. Also, instead of discussing these minor issues with the West, Muslims must have a rational dialogue with them on their beliefs and intellectual criteria so that they can correct the basis of their thinking. Muslims should look at cartoons and incidents of apostasy through the lens of Islam and refuse to use Western and infidel ideas of freedom and equality as a criterion. Also, instead of discussing these sub-issues with the West, we need to have a rational dialogue with them on their beliefs and intellectual criteria so that they can correct the basis of their thinking. After which it will not be more difficult to change all other concepts.

**Conclusion:**

The Western view of freedom recognizes freedom of speech as a key to human rights and liberties. Though they favor freedom as most sacred of their values, they also have differences of opinion in limiting or delimiting freedom of speech. Some of the scholars are of the opinion to limit the notion through moral and legal authorities, but the majority of Western scholars oppose to restrict or regulate the freedom of expression. They consider it a firm base for other civil rights and liberties. It also observes that every scholar has his own interpretation of the national and international laws which are related to freedom, liberties and rights. From Islamic perspective, liberty is a fundamental right as defined by Qur'an and Sunnah and it has some legal, moral and social restrictions to save the public from any chaos, conflict and clash in state and society. In other words, Islam does not allow this unlimited liberty and freedom on the sacrifice of moral, religious social and legal norms. One most important observation is that the Islamic and western thoughts have used mostly the same terms in modern legal and sociopolitical context but their actual scope, interpretation and meanings are totally different from each other.

Therefore, it is recommended that Muslim scholars and rulers should be aware of the interpretation of terms it is necessary to avoid misconception and ambiguity. Western concept of freedom is creeping into Muslim societies with quoting of Islamic codes, which are misplaced and misleading, therefore warrant building of knowledge and understanding of Islam to be able to carry out useful dialogue with the West in formulation and modification of the international laws and conventions. In the context of countering the blasphemous activities in

the name of freedom of expression, it will be worthwhile for OIC to consider introducing a “Nobel prize” in the name of Holy Prophet PBUH in different fields like knowledge/research, justice, humanity service, and peace to project the last Prophet PBUH in the West.

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