

# Can Muslim say SALAAM to non Muslim?

*By Khurshid imam*

## 1. Introduction

One of the issues that are of much discomfort for our Hindu brethren is the issue of *Salaam*. Many Hindus complain that when they greet Muslims with *Salaam* or *AsSalaam o alaikum* then Muslims don't say *walaikum asSalaam*. Our Hindu brethren expect *walaikum asSalaam* from Muslims. "Why Muslims don't say *Walaikum AsSalaam* to us"? - is one of the questions very often asked by non Muslims to Muslims.

On the other hand most of Muslims are of the idea that a Muslim can not say *Salaam* or *AsSalaam o alikum* or *walaikum asSalaam* to any non Muslims. One can find lot of fatwas (religious verdict) against saying *Salaam* to non Muslim. The same group of Muslims is also of the idea that it is prohibited to seek forgiveness or do *dua* of *maghfirat* to any non Muslim.

What is the reality if this issue? Can a Muslim say *Salaam* to non Muslim? Can a Muslim do *dua* (prayer or supplication) of forgiveness for non Muslim / *mushrik* / *kafir*? Let's understand this issue with unbiased and open mind.

\* *Salaam* means 'Peace'. *AsSalaam o alaikum* means 'Peace be upon you'. *walaikum asSalaam* means 'Peace be upon you too'.

\* *Mushrik* means one who associates partner with God. In simple words one who worship something else as God.

## 2. Claim of some Muslims and the misunderstanding

Some Muslims claim that Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has told to not to initiate *Salaam* to non Muslims. Also people say that Prophet told us to say only *walaikum* when greeted by a non Muslim.

This wrong conclusion is the result of failing to derive correct guidance from *hadees*.

Claim of such people is based on following ahadees mainly:

A> Narrated AbuHurayrah Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: Do not greet the Jews and the Christians before they greet you and when you meet any one of them on the roads force him to go to the narrowest part of it. (*Hadith - Sahih Muslim, Book 026, Number 5389*)

B> 'A'isha reported that some Jews came to Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) and they said: Abu'l-Qasim (the Kunya of the Holy Prophet), as-Sam-u-'Alaikum (**Death be upon you**), whereupon he (the Holy Prophet) said: Wa 'Alaikum (On you too). 'A'isha reported: In response to these words of theirs, I said: But let there be death upon you and disgrace also, whereupon Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: 'A'isha, do

not use harsh words. She said: Did you hear what they said? Thereupon he (the Holy Prophet) said: Did I not respond to them when they said that; I said to them: Wa'Alaikum (let it be upon you). (*Hadith - Sahih Muslim, Book 026, Number 5386*)

By quoting these types of ahadees people arrive at the conclusion that:

- a. A muslim should only say *WALAIKUM* when greeted by non Muslims.
- b. A muslim should not initiate Salaam to non Muslims.

### **3. Reason for the misunderstanding**

Again: the most commonly repeated mistake of the majority of Muslim. Not understanding an issue **UNDER THE PRINCIPLE OF QURAN**. When people don't look at Quran, don't analyze what Allah has revealed, don't ponder over how Quran has guided and directly try to reach at conclusion just by looking at *hadees* in isolation then they are bound to make mistake.

Based on mainly above *ahadees* people conclude that it's not allowed to say *Salaam* to ALL non Muslims. This erroneous and false understanding is due to:

- a> Not understanding an issue under the guidance of Quran.
- b> Not considering Quran as the ultimate guidance and final criteria from almighty God.
- c> Taking the meaning of *hadees* by completely ignoring the context, background of issue.
- d> Also people don't try to find out if the ruling was only for certain people and for certain time or for all people till the day of *qiyamah*.

### **4. Ahadees under consideration**

As far as above *ahadees* are concerned then following points should be very clear to all:

1. "Do not initiate *Salaam* with them..." - It is not difficult to understand that this injunction was specifically when Muslims were going to *Banu Quraizah* - who were in hostile terms with Muslims. And these Jews were the open enemy of Islam who has rejected the prophet hood of Prophet Muhammad even though prophet was alive among them. People who rejected Prophet Muhammad as Prophet were much severe in kufr (denying) compared to today's non Muslims - as far as rejecting prophet hood is concerned because that time Prophet was alive among them.
2. "...this hadith relates to "a state of hostilities" which had erupted at that time against the Muslims. It was, in fact, at the time of the campaign against *Banû Qurayzah*. This is established by another authentic *hadith* where the Prophet [peace be upon him] said: "... We are going forth in the morning against a group of Jews, so do not initiate the greeting of Peace with them..." [ Musnad Ahmad 26695 and Mu'jam al-Tabarani al-Kabir 22 / 291. See also Musnad Ahmad 16844 and.17584.]. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani

relates the same from al-Bukhari's al-Adab al-Mufrad and from Sunan.al-Nasa'I while discussing this topic in "Fath.al-Bari".[.11./39.]

3. The second *hadees* is very clearly mentioning why Prophet told *walaikum*. It says that since Jews wished death to prophet by saying "*as-Sam-u-'Alaikum*" i.e. death be on you so he replied *Walaikum* i.e. same to you. Is it difficult to understand why prophet said ONLY *walaikum*? Do non Muslims around you wish you by saying 'Death be on you'? Obviously not. So this commandment of prophet was specific to a particular situation and not a general commandment for all non Muslims till the day of *qiyamah*.

4. If someone is hell bent on taking these *ahadees* without context, situation and background and argues - "No No! Since *ahadees* tells us not to initiate *Salaam* to Jews and Christians so one should not greet ANY non Muslims " - then my argument is - "OK, so using this understanding it can be said that *hadees* speaks about not initiating *Salaam* to Jews and Christians; it does not prohibit initiating *Salaam* to Hindus, jainis, Buddhist, Sikh etc - So it means one can say *Salaam* to Hindus and all other non Muslims except Jews and Christian - do you agree???" Can you get me fatwa from any scholar that saying *Salaam* to jews and Christians is prohibited but it is allowed for other faith people like Hindus, Buddhist, Sikh etc? It is very obvious one will not get such fatwa.

Also the first *hadees* also mentions that "when you meet any one of them on the roads force him to go to the narrowest part of it" – if you believe that this *hadees* injunction was for you also today then will you force your Christian friends or teachers to narrow path when you meet them in road? No! This instruction was temporary in nature for a specific case.

5. Also if you consider this commandment of Prophet to be generic in nature and for **all** non Muslims till the day of *qiyamah* then you should realize that this judgment contradicts Quran. Wait!!!! Don't open your fatwa bank. Have patience. Kindly read complete article to find out what ruling Almighty God has given to us in this matter. If Almighty God has guided us that we can say *Salaam* to non Muslims (Not each and every non Muslim) and seek forgiveness for them (Not each and every non Muslim) then can prophet go against the rulings of God? No! Never! Impossible.

6. The commandment of Prophet not to initiate greetings to SOME of non Muslims is in perfect harmony with the guidance of Quran (It is explained later). To what kind of non Muslims we should not initiate *Salaam* ? For what kind of non Muslims we can not do *dua* of forgiveness? Read these in later part of article.

## 5. Revisiting basics

### A. Quran is NOT the book of history or story but it's the book of guidance

Though Muslims day and night swear that “Quran is the word of Almighty God, we should follow the teachings of Quran into our life, we should rule by Quran” - but when it comes to seeking guidance then first thing people do is set aside Quran and look at other sources.

Remember: Though quran contains science, history, mathematics, logic etc - its MAIN purpose is guidance of mankind. When it tells you events of past prophet and past community then it is not for only for information but it is for giving guidance. When Quran tells the crime of past community then you should not think that - "Ok! This was the crime of past community. thats it!!". No No! This incidence is mentioned in quran to warn you, so that you don't commit error committed by past community, you should take guidance from these events. So the purpose of revelation for Quran is to get guidance and then rule your life by that.

*" The month of Ramadhan in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion ....."* [Quran, Surah Baqrah 2: 185]

Please mark the purpose of Quran.

1. It is for whole mankind. Quran is not exclusive property of any particular sect, religion, group of race.
2. Quran contains clear proofs. The proofs given by Quran are self explanatory.
3. Quran is for guidance purpose. We MUST seek guidance from Quran.
4. Quran is the criterion – it means in any matter Quran will have the last say; what is right and what is wrong – what Quran decides will be final.

### **B. Those who don't follow rulings from Quran are kafir and fasiq and zalim**

Quran is word of Almighty God.

Quran is word of Almighty God.

Quran is word of Almighty God.

No wonder Muslims claim Quran to be word of God loudly but when it comes to ACTUALLY believing and practicing it they fail miserably.

Quran says that one MUST judge as per the revelation of Almighty God.

*It was we who revealed the law (to Moses): therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the prophets who bowed (as in Islam) to Allah's will, by the rabbis and the doctors of law: for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah's book, and they were witnesses thereto: therefore fear not men, but fear me, and sell not my signs for a miserable price. **If any do fail to judge by what Allah hath revealed, they are Unbelievers (kaferoon).*** [Quran, Surah Maida 5:44]

*We ordained therein for them: "Life for life, eye for eye, nose or nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and wounds equal for equal." But if any one remits the retaliation by way of charity, it is an act of atonement for him. **And if any fail to judge by what Allah hath revealed, they are wrong-doers (Zalemoon).*** [Quran, Surah Maida 5:45]

*Let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein. **If any do fail to judge by what Allah hath revealed, they are those who rebel (Faseqoon).** [Quran, Surah Maida 5:47]*

*To you We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: **so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed,** and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee.....;[Quran, Surah Maida 5:48]*

*And this (He commands): **you judge between them by what Allah hath revealed,** and follow not their vain desires, but beware of them lest they beguile thee from any of that (teaching) which Allah hath sent down to thee. And if they turn away, be assured that for some of their crime it is Allah's purpose to punish them. And truly most men are rebellious. [Quran, Surah Maida 5:49]*

Above ayah of Quran make very clear that if we judge against the guidance of Quran then it is kufr / zulm / fisq / absolutely wrong. See how much emphasis Allah has given on judging from what he has revealed.

### **C. Quran permits saying Salaam to non Muslims. It prohibits only for a certain types of non muslims**

I know very well that i have taken much time before arriving at the crux of the article - the reason is: to remind Muslims about the basics of Islam. Muslims - by large- have abandoned Quran and that is what will be complain of Prophet on the Day of Judgment. "Oh my Lord! My people have **abandoned this Quran**" Quran, Surah Furqan (25) - Ayah 30

Let's see What Almighty God has told us about the greetings or saying *Salaam* or seeking forgiveness for non Muslims.

A. "When you are greeted with a greeting, greet in return with what is better than it, or (at least) return it equally" [Quran – Surah al-Nisa' 4:86]

In the above ayah Allah mentions a generic rule regarding greeting – that when anyone wishes you with a greeting then you should respond with better greeting or at least with equal greeting.

B. "And the servants of (Allah) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, **they say, 'Salaam !' (Peace).**" [Al-Qur'an, Surah Furqan 25:63]

Here also Allah instructs us that as a good believer we should be humble and when dealing with *jahil* or ignorant (they may be Muslim or non muslim) we should say *Salaam*.

C. “*And when they hear vain talk, they turn away there from and say: ‘to us our deeds, and to you yours; Salaam u alaikum (peace be to you): we Seek not the ignorant.’*” [Al-Qur’an, Surah Qasas 28:55]

Here again Almighty God instructs us that when vain talk or useless talk is going on then turn away from such group (they may be Muslims or non muslims) by saying *AsSalaam u alaikum*. Here also Quran proves that it’s allowed to say *Salaam* to non Muslims.

D. Then Allah makes crystal clear in the matter of saying *Salaam* to non Muslim or *kafir* or *mushrik* and also about doing *dua* of *maghfirat* for them i.e. seeking forgiveness for them.

*And mention in the Book (the Qur'an) Ibrahim (Abraham). Verily he was a man of truth, a Prophet.*

*When he said to his father: "O my father! Why do you worship that which hears not, sees not and cannot avail you in anything?"*

*"O my father! Verily there has come to me of the knowledge that which came not unto you. So follow me, I will guide you to the Straight Path.*

*"O my father! Worship not Shaitan (Satan). Verily Shaitan (Satan) has been a rebel against the Most Gracious (Allah).*

*"O my father! Verily I fear lest a torment from the Most Gracious (Allah) should overtake you, so that you become a companion of Shaitan"*

***He (the father) said: "Do you reject my gods, O Ibrahim (Abraham)? If you stop not (this), I will indeed stone you. So get away from me safely (before I punish you)."***

إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ

***Ibrahim (Abraham) said: "Peace be on you! (AsSalaam u alikum) I will ask Forgiveness of my Lord for you. Verily He is unto me Ever Most Gracious.***

[Quran – Surah Maryam 19:41-47]

E. Finally Almighty God describes the universal principal regarding saying *Salaam* and seeking forgiveness for non Muslims.

*It is not (proper) for the Prophet and those who believe to ask Allah's Forgiveness for the Mushrikun, even though they be of kin, **after it has become clear to them that they are the dwellers of the Fire.***

*And Ibrahim's (Abraham) invoking (of Allah) for his father's forgiveness was only because of a promise he [Ibrahim (Abraham)] had made to him (his father). **But when it became clear to him [Ibrahim (Abraham)] that he (his father) is an enemy of Allah**, he dissociated himself from him. Verily Ibrahim (Abraham) was Awwah (one who invokes Allah with humility, glorifies Him and remembers Him much) and was forbearing.*

[Quran – Surah Tauba 9:113-114]

Here is the key to the whole issue. Few important points from above two references i.e Surah maryam 19:41-47 and Surah Tauba 9:113-114

1. Prophet Abraham invited his father to monotheism. His father was a *mushrik* who was committing shirk (Associating partner with Almighty God) knowingly. We know father of Prophet Abraham used to make idol for worship purpose.
2. His father rejected the invitation and got angry at Abraham. He threatened Prophet Abraham with stoning-to-death and asked him to leave. Thus in simple words – Prophet Abraham invited his father to the religion of God and his father rejected it thus becoming *kafir*.
3. But even then Prophet Abraham said *Assalam u alaikum* i.e Peace be upon you. Not only this, but also Prophet Abraham told that he will seek forgiveness for his father from Allah i.e he would do *dua* of *maghfirat* for his father. Imagine!
4. And afterwards when he became dead sure (After continuous and strong rejection of Islam by his father) that his father will never return to truth that he stopped praying for his father.
5. Allah gives a principal here that if you are dead sure that a person will never return to the truth then you should not seek his forgiveness or do *dua* of *maghfirat* or say *SALAM*.. Before this one CAN do *dua* of *maghfirat* or seek forgiveness from God or say *Salam*.
6. So in layman's language one can say:  
No Salam category> You feel that this person has constantly rejected the truth of God after being explained about Islam many times and he will never ever return to *deen* of almighty God then you can NOT say *Salam* to him.  
If it is not the case <No Salam category> then you CAN do *Salam* or seek his forgiveness from God.

**How many non Muslims around you fall under category < No Salam category >???**  
**Hardly a few!!!!**

#### **D. Prophet's instruction is as per quran**

I hope now it is clear that which category of people were there for whom Prophet advised Muslims to not to say Salaam. Of course they were those people who fall under < No *Salam* category >

Prophet prohibited Muslims from saying Salam to those non Muslims who fell under the category mentioned by Quran in Surah Tauba 9:113-114

The prohibition of saying *Salam* to non Muslims will apply to ONLY this category of people about whom one is sure that he is going to be in hell.

#### **6. Conclusion**

1. Saying *Salaam* means “*AsSalaam -o-alaikum*” i.e. May peace of Almighty God be upon you.
2. Some Muslims have misconception that Islam does not allow saying *Salaam* to all non Muslims.
3. Almighty God instructs us that one can NOT say *Salaam* or do *dua* of forgiveness for those *mushriks* (*mushrik* means one who associate partner with Almighty God) about whom you are dead sure that they are going to be in hell because of their constant rejection of truth. Under this category those people will come who have been very open and continuous rejecter of truth.
4. To rest of non Muslims one can say *Salaam* or reply *walaikum asSalaam* .

*\* If you don't agree with the mail then instead of giving fatwa of deviation / kufr / shirk / biddat - have faith in Allah and leave it to him to judge.*

*\* Author: Khurshid Imam is software engineer at Bangalore. For any criticism / feedback / suggestion feel free to mail – serviceforhumanity@gmail.com*

The article can be found at: <http://khurshidimam.blogspot.com/2011/12/can-muslim-say-salam-to-non-muslim.html> and same has been attached in the mail.