

Use of previous scriptures (Bible, Vedas etc) for *Dawah* – Allowed or not?

By Khurshid Imam

A. Introduction

Almighty God reveals his words to Prophet for the guidance of mankind. This revelation in the form of book is called holy book. There have been several revelations from Almighty God. Quran is the last in the series. Pre Quranic revelations are not in their 100% pure form today because they could not be preserved with the passage of time. Holy Vedas, Holy bible etc come into this category. Now what should be approach of Muslims towards Vedas or bible? Since Hindus and Christians refer to their books Vedas and Bible respectively – what should be attitude of Muslims while dealing with them? Lets ponder over these points with UNBIASED and NEUTRAL mind.

* *Dawah: Inviting people to God/Islam.*

* *Hadees: Words/events/actions attributed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).*

* *Some people may object why i m referring vedas along with bible. Most of the muslims are of idea that bible was originally from God but not vedas. Since i m of the understanding that vedas were originally from God hence i m using it along with bible.Lets leave this topic as of now. Will discuss in future inshallah.*

B. Some Muslims have objection against using previous scriptures (bible, Vedas etc) for dawah.

Some Muslims say that one should not use Bible, Vedas etc for dawah purpose. Their argument is:

1. Since Quran is the only uncorrupted book of Almighty God today so we should give dawah using Quran only. We can not refer a book that is not 100% pure.
2. Also people quote a hadees to support their view. This is explained later in the article.
3. A few ignorant even go to the extent to say that one should not even possess bible etc.

C. Revisiting basics

Again: the most commonly repeated mistake by 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.

Quran is the final criteria in judging:

" *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.

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No wonder Muslims claim Quran to be word of God loudly but when it comes to ACTUALLY believing and practicing; many fail miserably. Quran says that one MUST judge as per the revelation of Almighty God.

“.....If any do fail to judge by what Allah hath revealed, they are Unbelievers (kaferoon)”.

[Quran, Surah Maida 5:44]

“....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 you.....* [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.

D. One CAN definitely use previous scripture for Dawah

1. The misunderstanding

The Hadees which is used by people for prohibiting use of bible etc for dawah is as follows:

“Narrated Jabir Ibn Abdullah : Umar ibn al-Khattab brought to Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) a copy of the Torah and said: ‘Allah’s Messenger, this is a copy of the Torah’. He (Allah’s Messenger) kept quiet and he (Umar) began to read it. The color of the face of Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) underwent a change, whereupon Abu Bakr said: “Would that your mother mourn you, don’t you see the face of Allah’s Messenger?” Umar saw the face of Allah’s Messenger (pbuh) and said: ‘I seek refuge with Allah from the wrath of Allah and the wrath of His Messenger. We are well pleased with Allah as Lord, with Islam as religion, and with Muhammad as Prophet’. Whereupon Allah’s Messenger (pbuh) said : ‘By Him in Whose hand is the life of Muhammad, even if Moses were to appear before you and you were to follow him, leaving me aside, you would

certainly stray into error; for if (Moses) were alive (now), and he found my prophetic ministry, he would have definitely followed me'. (Sunan Ad-Darimi, Vol. 1, Hadith No. 435)

Looking at this in isolation and without context people conclude that it's prohibited or *haram* to read bible forever. Please note following important points:

1. This event happened in the early stage of medina life. At this time various Islamic laws were being implemented and were supposed to be followed by all.
2. During a time when Quranic eco-socio-politico system was being implemented it was not only undesirable but also dangerous to get immersed into laws of previous revelations. This was to make sure that people understand and adhere to the Quranic laws and there should not be any kind of fitnah.
3. Now Prophet Muhammad and laws given by him should be understood and clear into the minds of ummah that's why prophet referred – *"for if (Moses) were alive (now), and he found my prophetic ministry, he would have definitely followed me"*
4. Not only hazrat umar was reading the part of torah but also he used to go to jewish school *baitul-midrash* for reading torah.
5. This apparent prohibition of reading torah was just a **temporary** one as Prophet later permitted to quote from the scriptures of people of the book as it is evident from the following hadees:
The Prophet said, "Convey (my teachings) to the people even if it were a single sentence, and tell others the stories of Bani Israel, for it is not sinful to do so. And whoever tells a lie on me intentionally, will surely take his place in the (Hell) Fire."(Sahih Al Bukhari, Vol. 4, Hadith no. 3461)

2. Quran associates Muslims with previous scriptures

After freeing mind from the misunderstanding of hadees lets ponder seriously over below points. Contrary to the popular belief; Quran **associates** believers to previous scriptures rather **dissociating**. It's surprising but true. Those who ponder over Quran will have better idea of it. Quran confirms about the previous revelations sent by Allah time and again (even though they got changed with the time).

Quran NOT only mentions about previous scriptures, but also confirm that they were from Allah. Quran is full of references where Allah speaks about Quran confirming previous revelations. Go through these ayah and see how universal message of Quran is. Quran relates a believer to previous scriptures. For example:

1. Quran, Surah Baqrah 2:40-41
2. Quran, Surah Baqrah 2:89
3. Quran, Surah Baqrah 2:97
4. Quran, Surah Baqrah 2:101
5. Quran, Surah Al Imran 3:3
6. Quran, Surah Nisa 4:47
7. Quran, Surah Maida 5:46
8. Quran, Surah Maida 5:48
9. Quran, Surah Ana'm 6:92
10. Quran, Surah Yunus 10:37
11. Quran, Surah Yusuf 12:111
12. Quran, Surah fatir 35:31

13. Quran, Surah Zumur 39:33
14. Quran, Surah Ahqaf 46:11-12
15. Quran, Surah Ahqaf 46:30
16. Quran Surah Juma 61:6

Not only this: Quran also tells believers to **believe in previous revelations and not distinguish between them**. Look at :

1. Quran, Surah Baqrah 2:136, 285
2. Quran, Surah al imran 3:84
3. Quran, Surah Nisa 4:152

What does it mean today to believe in previous revelations when they are corrupted? It means:

- There were several revelations from God; though except Quran all are changed, interpolated and concocted.
- We should not completely cut off from previous scripture; rather we can use those for dawah purpose i.e. while inviting people to God or islam.
- Quran remains the only uncorrupted and pure revelation from God today.
- Those portions of previous books that matches with Quran - we can say - if not in exact letter; the jist of this part was from God.

3. Quran admits that previous revelation have been changed, yet.....

Please keep in mind that Quran admits that previous scriptures have been changed. Quran condemns adulteration in previous revelations.

"Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: "This is from Allah," to traffic with it for miserable price!- Woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby". Quran, Surah Baqrah 2:79

Even at the time of Prophet Muhammad, bible was very much distorted. Even that time Christians used to believe in trinity, Jesus as son of God etc.

*"O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His apostles. **Say not "Trinity" : desist: it will be better for you:** for Allah is one Allah. Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs". Quran, Surah Nisa 4:171*

*"**They do blaspheme who say: "(Allah) is Christ the son of Mary."** But said Christ: "O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord." Whoever joins other gods with Allah,- Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help."Quran, Surah Maida 5:72*

*"**They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity:** for there is no god except One Allah. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them". Quran, Surah Maida 5:73*

4. Quran permits Muslims to Quote Bible, Vedas etc

"Say: "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah. that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we are Muslims (we surrender our will to God)." Quran, Surah Al-Imran 3:64

- Important point is: At one place Quran admits that belief of Christianity with regard to monotheism and status of Jesus was distorted (4:171, 5:72-73) and on the other hand here (3:64) God is asking Muslims to come to common terms with people with previous scriptures? And that also regarding worshipping of One God? How is it possible? The answer is : *This common terms is achieved by looking at respective scriptures.* When we look at Quran, bible and Vedas then we have to look at the common teachings.
- It means that even though previous scriptures are changed believers are recommended to talk to non muslims by talking about common terms that is mentioned in their scripture and Quran. This is amazing hikmah (wisdom) of Quran. This is all-inclusive approach of Quran. You believe in Bible to be God's word? Ok, then lets come and agree to the scriptural quotations that describes God as ONE and ONLY.
- Not only this but 3:64 also guarantees that *oneness of God is still preserved in their scriptures*(even though tauheed is mixed up with shirk, yet Quran asks us to talk about similarities). When we actually look into Bible, Vedas then we DO find that oneness of God is mentioned their (even though shirk is also mentioned). This is again a great miracle of almighty God that he will preserve tauheed (oneness of God) even if previous scripture is distorted.
- Wisdom of Quran continues and it *asks people of the book to at least ESTABLISH what was revealed to them.* This is very important.

*Say "O people of the Scripture! You have nothing till you **act according** to the Taurat (Torah), the Injeel (Gospel), and what has been sent down to you from your Lord ...". Quran, Surah Maida 5:68*

Usually Muslims scholars ignore this kind of ayah. If non Muslims are not ready to follow and implement Quran then **at least let them establish what was revealed to them** from Allah.

We know the famous incidence wherein Prophet judged among jews with torah (Again keep in mind: that torah was not 100% pure even that time. It had interpolations).

A Jew and a Jewess were brought to Allah's Messenger (pbuh) on a charge of committing an illegal sexual intercourse. The Prophet (pbuh) asked them. "What is the legal punishment (for this sin) in your book (Torah)?" They replied, "Our priests have innovated the punishment of blackening the faces with charcoal and Tajbiya." Abdullah bin Salam said, "O Allah's Messenger, tell them to bring the Torah." The Torah was brought, and then one of the jews put his hand over the Divine Verse of the Rajam (stoning to death) and started reading what preceded and what followed it. On that, Ibn Salam said to the jew, "Lift your hand." Behold ! The Divine Verse of the Rajam was under his hand. So Allah's Messenger ordered that the two (sinners) be stoned to death, and they were stoned. Ibn 'Umar added: so both of them were stoned at the Balat and I saw the jew sheltering the Jewess.

(Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 8, Hadith No. 6819)

So prophet judged between Jews with their scripture. But wait! Look at the Quranic ayah that describes this event. See the word of Almighty God. Allah is saying why these jews came to you for judgement when judgement of Allah was therein torah?

“But why do they come to you for decision, when they have law before them?- therein is the (plain) command of Allah. yet even after that, they would turn away. For they are not (really) People of Faith”. Quran, Surah maida 5:43

Allah makes clear that when these people were having WORD of ALLAH (at least that portion that is under discussion) then how come they were not implementing it?

Immediately a question comes to mind – “today: how we will come to know what was revealed by Allah?”. Obviously Quran and truth will be the criteria to judge this. Portion matching with Quran can be called from God.

E. Conclusion

1. Some Muslims think that its prohibited to use previous scriptures like Bible, Vedas etc for dawah purpose. Some ignorant go to the extreme and say that a Muslim is not permitted to possess these books.
2. Quran has time and again confirmed about previous revelations being from Allah even though they were changed by people.
3. Even at the time of Prophet Muhammad bible was changed. “Jesus as son of God”, “trinity” etc has crept into Christians that time. Yet God tells in Quran to speak about similarities between these scriptures.
4. In fact Quran give the magical formula that in dawah talk about common terms. These common terms can be determined ONLY through their scriptures.
5. The extreme wisdom of quran is that even if people of book don't come to Quran; minimum requirement from them is to establish what was revealed to them from Allah.
6. It's completely permitted to use previous scriptures for dawah or related purpose.

** 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.*

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The article can be found at: <http://khurshidimam.blogspot.in/2012/03/using-bible-vedas-etc-for-dawah.html> and same has been attached in the mail.