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Rahmatan lil 'Alamin

Rahmatan lil 'Alamin (Blessings to all in the Universe)! That is Allah announcing that He had sent Muhammad as a blessing to all, and with him, Islam. Islam teaches and spreads the culture of *tsaqafah* (charity), love, peace, tenderness, and respect for all human beings. It is a guidance for all. Islam transcends boundaries and limits. It means peace, and *rahmatan lil 'alamin* is love for all in the universe. The Islam of *Rahmatan lil 'alamin* consciously puts God's presence at the center of our life and community so as to foster peace and love for humans and nature. It is indeed a blessing for the entire universe, hence the same appellation given to Prophet Muhammad, *s.a.w.* For he had indeed given mercy and blessings to the ummah, lifting us out of the Age of Ignorance to the Age of Peace and Prosperity that we now enjoy. *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin Islam* also acknowledges the prophet's presence in the center of our daily life and community so we too could foster peace and love, for humans as well as nature.

“And we did not send you (Muhammad), but to (be) a blessing to the universe,” as per Surah Al Anbiya (21:107). God did not send Muhammad except as a mercy for the whole world and to spread the message of Islam, not to destroy the infidels but to foster peace.

2 Manifestations Of The Consciousness And Presence Of *Rahmatan Lil Alamin*

- Being tolerant
- Avoiding discriminatory attitudes.
- Caring for others
- Disposing of garbage in its proper place

An example of *Islam rahmatan lil alamin* is the teacher or lecturer who is a resource for her students and undergraduates in helping them to learn. Prophet Muhammad, *s.a.w.*, was sent to teach and spread Islam, as a blessing for the world and all mankind. *Rahmat* means grace combined with tenderness and compassion; hence the Prophet's appellation, *rahmatul lil 'alamin*. He brought blessings for the whole world, not just Muslims. This is the message of Islam preached by the Prophet *s.a.w.*, to bring peace and security for all.

We need religion. It has an important role in organizing and guiding our social life as well as in helping maintain social norms and social restraints. It socializes individuals and exercises positive influence over individuals and societies, more so those that are diverse.

Rahim (generosity) is Allah's sacred blessings unique unto Muslims, thus *keboshshun lil muslimin*. Allah dispenses everything. If Islam is practiced right, then Allah will shower upon us His Rahman (Mercy) and Rahim (Generosity). Interpreted thus, the laws of Allah, *sunnatullah*, apply to both Muslims as well as non-Muslims. If followed, they would get Allah's blessings—His mercifulness as well as generosity. However even though they are Muslims, if they do not make the effort in being kind, then they will not get these rewards.

God exhorts us to compete for His Grace. From this emerges God's command for us to compete to do good. From this it follows we have to be competitive in all our endeavors. For example, Muslims who are not competitive in economic activities cannot expect to survive and will not become prosperous. Likewise if a non-Muslim were to be competitive in those areas, then they would rightly reap the just rewards in those areas.

While the right to entry into Heaven is the mercy of Allah SWT, that privilege is restricted to believers. As such we can conclude that the unity of *rahmatan lil' alamin* is the unity of God's grace that is encompassed in all His mercy. In the context of *rahmatan lil' alamin Islam*, it (Islam) has arranged the manner and practices with regard to the theological, ritual, social, and humanitarian

aspects. In theological terms, Islam gives a firm formulation that must be believed by every adherent, but this cannot be the excuse to force non-Muslims to embrace Islam (*Laa Ikrooha Fiddeen*). Likewise with the religious rituals; those have already been as laid out in the Qur'an and Sunnah in terms of their details as well as practices.

In the context of social life, Islam provides only the basic guidelines or pillars. The operational details and practices would have to be arrived at consensually within each community, based on its values, diversity, and uniqueness. Islam recognizes this plurality of human societies, and views diversity as an aspect of His blessing. It is His blessings to test us to choose our own unique path towards development after factoring those various social elements and other considerations.

Plurality and diversity are Allah's will, as expressed in Surah Ar Rum Verse 22 (30:22) which approximately translated says, "And yet another of his signs He created the heavens and the earth, the differences in your languages and skin color. These truly are signs for those who know."

Likewise the words of God in Surat al-Hujurat Verse 13 (49:13): "O mankind, indeed we created you from a single man and a single woman, made you into nations and tribes so you may know each other. In God's eyes, the most honored amongst you are the ones most aware of Him; God is All-Knowing and All-Aware."

Those verses place social pluralism as a necessary condition (*conditio sine qua non*) in God's creation. In the Qur'an there are many verses mentioning love and salvation, among others Surat Al-Hujurat (49:10) which commands us to take care of each other and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood: "Truly the believers are brothers. Therefore reconcile the relationship between you and fear Allah, so that you may receive mercy". The lesson that we can draw from this is that to have peace, we should all treat each other as brothers. In this context, the late K H Hasyim Muzadi proposed three types of brotherhood (*ukhummah*).

- First, *Ukhuwwah Islamiyah*, that is, brotherhood that grows and develops on the basis of religion (Islam), be it the local, national or even international scale.
- Second, *Ukhuwwah wathaniyah*, brotherhood that grows and develops on a national basis.
- Third, *Ukhuwwah basyariyah*, brotherhood that grows and develops on the basis of humanity.

These three types of *ukhuwwah* must be developed in their balanced proportion. One does not oppose or contradicts the other two for only through these three dimensional senses of brotherhood can we realized the ideals of and blessings of *Lil'Alamin*.