

AUSTRALIAN PAKISTANI NATIONAL ASSOCIATION (APNA)

**In collaboration with
American College of Brisbane**

present

**Respect for other Religious Beliefs
New Global Phenomenon**

Delivered by

**The Most Eminent National Grand Mufti of Australia
Sheikh Abdul Quddoos Al Azhari**

**at
American College Brisbane
180 Logan Road,
Wooloongabba QLD**

24 October 2021



بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على أشرف الأنبياء والمرسلين

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuhu

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owner of the land on which we gather and I would like to pay my respect to their elders, past, present and emerging.

Respected President of Australian Pakistani National Association (APNA) Mr. Sayed Shuaib Zaidi, local Member of Parliament Mr. Mark Robertson, His Excellency the High Commissioner of Pakistan Zahid Hafeez Chaudry, Reverend Bannard Malik, various religious leaders and members of the clergy, representing various great religions and cultural backgrounds, brothers, sisters, ladies and gentlemen.

May the peace and blessings of God be upon you all

I am honoured to be included in this important interfaith conference on the occasion of Seeratur Rasul, the blessed biography of Muhammad Mustafa (SAW). The topic of today is:

‘Respect for other religious beliefs, a new global phenomenon’.

A little over fourteen hundred years ago Prophet Muhammed (SAW) in his farewell speech known as Khutbatul Wada', "The farewell sermon" of the Prophet, he declared, the first and foremost service of Islam to humanity that we are all equal regardless of our race or gender or language.

He proclaimed, ‘Oh people, your Lord is one, your father is one, and you all are from Adam, and Adam is from earth. There is no superiority of Arabs over non-Arabs, nor white over black, nor black over white. The only distinction, he declared, is that of piety and the level of individual piety is a secret only known to God. except God fearing and good deeds.

I would like to congratulate the organizers of this program for giving the youth a chance to showcase their talent.

Very well done Shuaib Bhai, they are our future and they need to be trained and groomed.

After these beautiful presentations by the youth, not much is left for me to say - though - I was thinking of a famous character we have in our tradition, Mullah Nasruddeen Hoja who always dressed up like a great Maulana and great Imam, and Grand Mufti.

He was once in a new township, and the people thought he was a grand Maulana and people said he had to make Juma Khutbah. Mullah Nasruddeen had to be forced to talk. He was not a Maulana or Imam but the people assumed he was a grand scholar and wanted him to give a sermon. He stood on the mimbar (pulpit) and asked the people:

“Oh Muslims, do you know what I am going to talk about?”

People replied: “No, we don’t know what you are going to talk about.”

Mullah Nasruddeen then said. “So, you people are so stupid and ignorant it is not worth me talking to you”, so he came down from the mimbar and walked away."

The people caught him again the next Friday and brought him to the mimbar to deliver the Khutbah. Mullah Nasruddeen said, “Do you know what I am going to talk about today?” and the people all said: "Yes, we know what you are going to talk about". He said: “That’s good, I don’t need to talk to you today seeing you all know what I am going to talk about”. He again descended the mimbar and went away.

The third week, which was the last week for him in that township. The people gathered and insisted that they need to catch him out. This time they decided that half the people would say they do know and the other half would say they do not know. Mullah Nasruddeen ascended the pulpit and he asked the question: “Do you know what I am going to talk about today?” Half of them said: “Yes, we know what you are going to talk about”, and the other half said: “No, we don’t know what you are going to talk about”. The Mullah said: “This is really great, those of you who do know teach those who don’t know” and then went away.

Brothers and sisters, ladies and gentlemen, today I am not going to say what Mullah Nasruddeen said, I am also not going to read my prepared

speech either, instead I am going to elaborate on some of the most important points from our sons and daughters and our young speakers who have just addressed us.

Christopher Malik was talking about Abrahamic religions, the similarity of the teachings of messengers and prophets of God. The philosophy behind the message of Allah, in a few words is:

We did not create ourselves. Someone else created us and he is Rabul Alameen (The Lord of the Universe).

What was the purpose of our creation?

Why He has created,

What our Creator likes or dislikes.

How to please our Creator and what displeases our Creator.

To tell these God sent messengers and prophets.

All these messengers were human like us, but free from the sin.

The first human being, Adam, was the first messenger of God, after Adam, about 124 thousand messengers and prophets came just to tell us the purpose of our lives and how best to lead a quality life. Some of the more famous prophets and messengers are: Noah, Ibrahim, Isaac, David, Solomon, Joseph, Jacob, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (peace and blessings upon them all).

All the messengers came from the same Noor, the same light, the light of Allah (SWT); they faithfully conveyed the message of Allah to humanity.

Their Source is One and the essence of their message is to submit to God, respect their fellow human beings and live in peace and harmony.

Mohammed Zaheer was talking about the charter of Medina. The first multifaith, multicultural constitution of the world.

Let me highlight some of the important points in the Charter of Medina,

Medina was a very different place, where different religious groups were living together; including Muslims, Christian, Jewish, and non-religious groups. Islam introduced a multi-faith, multicultural constitution. This constitution remains and is also known as the Charter of Medina.

CHARTER OF MEDINA.

The Constitution of Medina or Medina Charter was established by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in 622CE, it outlines the rights, duties and responsibilities of all the people living in the city of Medina, the first Islamic city-state. The charter regulates the relationship between Muslims and other communities that have different religious affiliations. The constitution protects all the people of Medina regardless of their religion. All were encouraged to practice their religion freely. Many historians consider the Constitution of Medina the first historical document to establish religious freedom as a right for faith communities.

Conditions of peace and war, ease and hardship, must be fair and equitable to all citizens alike.

Yathrib (Medina) will be sanctuary for the people of this pact.

No Jew will be wronged for being a Jew. No Christian would be persecuted for his faith. Everyone was guaranteed equal social, legal and economic access.

Any individual or group who is wronged must be helped.

A man will not be made liable for the misdeeds of his ally.

If anyone attacks anyone who is a party to this Pact, the other must come to his aid.

The parties to this Pact must seek mutual advice and mutual consultation.

Islam united the members of diverse faiths in Medina into a people belonging to a nation who can live together in peace and harmony, with equal rights and responsibilities.

Mohammed Zaheer also was pointing to a famous incident in front Masjid Nabawi, the Prophet's Mosque. On one occasion when Nabi Mohammed SAW and his companions were sitting in front of the masjid, a funeral procession was passing by, the Prophet asked the Sahaba to stand up in respect for the deceased. After the procession left, the Sahaba said to the Prophet: "Ya Rasulullah, He was not a Muslim he was a Jew". The Prophet Mohammed (SAW) rhetorically replied: "Wasn't he a human being?" This was a clear lesson of respect for the deceased of all faiths.

Sayyida Daniya Zaidi was talking about the verse: Lakum dinukum waliyadeen. "You have your faith and I have mine".

15 hundred years ago, Islam declared that respecting other religious beliefs is the new phenomenon of that day.

Islam declared: (*Al Quran 2:256*)

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ

'There is no force (or compulsion) in religion'

Faith is the sum of man's life experience. It is the duty of every sensible person to look for their best interest, in their own way, during his or her journey in the kingdom of God with other fellow human beings.

Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters once again I thank APNA and the American College of Brisbane for their collaboration in organizing this remarkable Seeratul Rasul, biography of Prophet Muhammad and respecting other religious beliefs. I am sure this will be a healthy basis for mutual respect, mutual understanding, mutual peace and harmony and mutual cooperation among the people of various faiths and spirituality.

Thank you very much, enjoy the evening and the peace and blessings of God upon you all.

Allah bless you.

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuhu.