

## **Importance of Unilateral Adjustment in Islam in the context of the Hudaybiyyah Treaty**

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The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, in effect, averted the impending conflict between the two parties by constituting a strategic withdrawal from the brink of confrontation. Remarkably, the first verse of chapter 48 in the Quran characterises this development as a 'clear victory' in favour of the adherents of Islam. The absence of direct engagement in warfare with their adversaries signified a resounding triumph on their part. It conveys that through the deliberate avoidance of armed conflict and, instead, through negotiating a peace accord, the Prophet of Islam effectively seized the opportunity to preserve their resources from being squandered in combat. Instead, these resources were wholly directed toward constructive endeavours.

The principle encapsulated in this notion of 'victory without war' undoubtedly assumes paramount significance within the Islamic framework. It finds its foundation in the enduring laws of nature and holds profound relevance for both individuals and collectives alike.

**Keywords:** Hudaybiyyah, Peace, Unilateral adjustment, Prophet Muhammad.

Prophet Muhammad regarded peace as of utmost importance during his initial thirteen years in Mecca. Despite facing formidable opposition, he adhered to a strategy of peaceful persuasion, consistently confronting powerful adversaries in Mecca. Unwavering in his commitment to a peaceful approach, he preached to those in search of guidance. The revelation of the Quran occurred subsequent to the signing of the No-War Pact during the Hudaybiyyah treaty between the Prophet and the Quraysh, marked by the proclamation: "Truly, we have granted you a clear victory" (48:1). This pact ushered in unprecedented opportunities for establishing peace before the Prophet and his Companions.

The Hudaybiyyah treaty is a significant treaty in Islamic history.<sup>i</sup> In 628, the C.E. Prophet entered into a treaty called the Hudaybiyyah Treaty.<sup>ii</sup> Prophet Muhammad, after declaring his Prophethood, faced a lot of atrocities from the Meccans, after which he then migrated to

Madinah.<sup>iii</sup> At the same time, Mecca was in charge of polytheists, who became the opponents of the Prophet. The Prophet wanted to visit Mecca to perform the Umrah as the Kaaba was situated there, but Meccans stopped the Prophet outside Mecca at a place called Hdaybiyyah. The Prophet travelled the rocky mountain and reached Hdaybiyyah.<sup>iv</sup> However, the Meccans did not let the Prophet enter, although 1400 followers accompanied him. If the Prophet and his companions had insisted, it would have surely led to war, but the Prophet receded. The Prophet opted for peace rather than continuous war to propagate the message of Islam.<sup>v</sup> The reference to Hdaybiyyah in the Quran indicates its importance as a superior method and strategy. At its beginning, the Hdaybiyyah peace treaty appeared to mean nothing but surrender and humiliation. However, the result showed that the treaty was successful because it opened the doors to opportunities in the future. That is why the Qur'an called it a 'clear victory' (48:1). The well-known '*taabii*', a follower of the companions, Ibn Shihab Az Zuhri, says:

*"Never before in Islam had there been such a great victory before Hdaybiyyah. Whenever Muslims and non-Muslims met one another before Hdaybiyyah, they came to the point of confrontation. But when peace prevailed and the war was stopped under the treaty, people became safe from one another. In this peaceful atmosphere, they interacted and began exchanging their thoughts. Then, whoever had an occasion to hear about Islam and applied judgment entered its fold."*<sup>vi</sup>

The Hdaybiyyah sunnah is the sum total of the actions of the Prophet of Islam. It exemplified how adopting a peaceful method may lead to open victory.

The treaty imposed humiliating conditions on the Prophet and his Companions, but that did not deter his resolve to adhere to it. Prophet Muhammad said, "O Ali, write: 'This is what Muhammad the Messenger of God has agreed upon with Suhayl ibn Amr'." But the Meccan leader Suhayl ibn Amr objected to this and said we do not consider you as the messenger of God. It is written in historical records that the Prophet did not wait for a moment and immediately told Ali to remove the phrase 'Messenger of God' after his name.<sup>vii</sup> This is the most prominent example of patience in a time of crisis. The provision was unilaterally unfair, yet it was accepted by the Prophet to avail a no-war pact. He did not hesitate to pay such a big price. As history records, his policy produced such positive results that within two years, almost the whole of Arabia had entered the fold of Islam. This is a demonstration of how the policy of non-confrontation leads to success. This 10-year no-war pact allowed the Prophet to work

uninterruptedly on a constructive program that would otherwise have been impossible. By means of this peaceful non-political program, the Prophet and his companions were able to consolidate themselves, and this approach led Muslims to strive in the field of spreading the message of Islam.

Therefore, the treaty averted the war. But in this entire process, the companions of the Prophet were disheartened, and they regarded it as a 'degrading treaty' at that time. Then, a verse of the Quran was revealed as "We have granted you a clear victory." (48:1). This reflected that God wanted peace instead of war. The Prophet did not make it a matter of prestige and returned after signing the peace treaty and without performing the Hajj.<sup>viii</sup> History tells us that within two years of the Peace pact of Hudaibiyyah, followers of Islam were well established.<sup>ix</sup>

On the occasion of the Hudaibiyyah Treaty, the Prophet of Islam brought matters to a successful conclusion by unilaterally accepting the conditions of his opponents. In this peace treaty, the Prophet had not received justice, but because peace had to be established at all costs, the Prophet agreed to all conditions.<sup>x</sup> This incident of Hudaibiyyah tells us that peace is the summum bonum and greatest good in Islam. This is because peace leads to normalcy; peace creates opportunities to work and fosters a culture of openness! The principle from this Prophetic Sunnah is never to take a case to the battlefield.

The peace treaty he entered into with his opponents meant that he and his companions had to return to Madinah without being able to proceed to Mecca to perform the Umrah or 'minor pilgrimage'. But Prophet Muhammad adjusted and realised that the treaty would bring more significant interaction and that they could freely meet.

To end the conflict with his opponents, the Prophet entered into the Hudaibiyya agreement, a ten-year unilateral no-war pact.<sup>xi</sup>

It consisted of the following conditions:

1. For a period of ten years, both parties would cease hostilities against each other.
2. There will be no meddling between the Quraysh and the Muslims, and there will be a free movement between the two.
3. Muhammad would return that year and, with his companions, be allowed to enter Mecca the following year.
4. If any Muslim comes to Muhammad, he will be returned to Quraysh, but not vice versa.
5. Anyone who wants to enter into a bond and alliance with Muhammad is free to do so, and anyone who wants to enter into a bond and alliance with the Quraysh is free to do so.<sup>xii</sup>

So, with the above treaty in force, the Prophet and his companions were to skip Mecca that year. Instead, they were to return from Hudaibiyyah to Medina and come next year for a stay of only three days, during which they were to perform Umra and then go back without delay quietly. A vital episode happened while the document was signed; Abu Jandal bin Suhayl suddenly walked into fetters. He had escaped from Mecca and came to Hudaibiyyah badly hurt and cried out for help, but Suhayl, his father, reminded the Prophet that their agreement was now enforced. The companions drew their swords out when Abu Jandal spoke aloud and handed him over to the Polytheist. Still, the Prophet returned him to the Quraysh by asking Abu Jandal to be patient and tolerate his situation for God's sake. He explained the importance of the Peace treaty and that he would not violate it. He also comforted him by saying God would provide him a way out of his hardship.<sup>xiii</sup>

This showed the Prophet honouring the treaty and thereby enforcing it immediately. The oppressors were awestruck by this unique moral conduct. Abu Jandal's presence later in Mecca became a symbol of Quraysh's degradation and Islam's moral ascendancy. Islam's high ethical standards won many people over.

The treaty of Hudaibiyyah gives us wisdom from the approach of the Prophet, that is, to avoid confrontation with others and not let a difficult situation turn into an ego issue. The important lesson is to rise above the sentiments and look at the matter more objectively. It can also be termed status quo, which requires not making the issue prestigious and adopting a passive approach to manage the situation more intelligently. One can move forward without inviting counterproductive results by giving concessions to the other party. Non-emotional thinking gives rise to serious thinking, precisely what happened in Hudaibiyyah. When Quraysh did not allow the Prophet of Islam to enter Mecca, he did not make it an ego issue; neither did he deal with the situation emotionally. His action plan was rather far-sighted than immediate as he led Muslims away from the field of war to the field of conveying the message of Islam, which was the main target of Islam.

The Prophet of Islam one-sidedly accepted all the conditions of the Quraysh and was able to make a no-war pact called the Hudaibiyyah Treaty. Since it was one-sided and skewed in favour of the enemy party, many Muslims, including senior companion Umar bin Khattab, felt that the agreement was a humiliating pact. But after this treaty was finalized and when the Prophet was halfway back, the chapter in the Quran called 'Victory' (Al-Fath) was revealed in which verse number one of chapter forty-eight says that God granted the believers a clear

victory.

The Quran stated it as a victory. This can be understood from the revelation that came later, mentioned in chapter forty-eight and verse twenty-seven, saying that God gave vision to the Prophet. He will undoubtedly enter the sacred Mosque, and a victory has been given beforehand.

In the beginning, Muslims saw the treaty more as a unilateral surrender, which brought only humiliation. However, God called it a clear victory from looking into the future. Ibn Shihab Az Zuhri, who was a companion of companions (Taabii), said that no previous victory in Islam was more significant than this. This was because battle among men resulted in nothing constructive; however, with the call of a truce treaty, people became safe from one another. This created a peaceful environment fertile for interaction, dialogue, and exchanging ideas. In those two years, twice or more people accepted Islam, and the mission of the Prophet spread unhindered.<sup>xiv</sup>

This came true in a short period, and the number of companions of the Prophet increased significantly. When the Prophet entered Mecca two years later as a conqueror, his number of companions had increased to almost ten thousand compared to less than two thousand when he was halted at Hdaybiyyah. All this resulted from the Hdaybiyyah treaty, which later led to the Islamic movement and opened up further opportunities for Islam. It gave the principle to mankind that when faced with a problem, the best thing to do is ignore the issues and buy time, which will eventually help us to avail ourselves of opportunities. God has created this world in such a way that the Quran says it is accompanied with ease whenever you face difficulties. This is mentioned in chapter ninety-four and verses number five and six.

This verse not only gives immense hope but also shows that when one faces adversity, the law of nature will provide opportunities. The focus should not be on removing the obstacles one faces, as that would stop the onward journey. So, the Sunnah of the Prophet is to avoid confrontation and treat adversity as temporary. The solution sometimes lies in accepting the unilateral conditions of the opponents. This was how the Prophet dealt with the Hdaybiyyah situation, which reflected his policy throughout his lifetime, whether in Mecca or Medina period. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan writes that the only difference between Hdaybiyyah and other situations is that the Hdaybiyyah policy was on the conditions of bilateral declaration. In contrast, it was followed on a unilateral basis at different times.<sup>xv</sup>

During his lifetime, the Prophet constantly evaluated circumstances objectively and followed the course of action based on his assessment. He never followed a confrontation policy. For example, when he publicly proclaimed the mission of Monotheism, he did not officially meet the idol worshippers to discuss the secret propagation of his message or that he would not harm the idols of the Kaaba. He completely refrained from colliding with idol worshippers and took a practical stand of doing his Dawah activity peacefully.

The Prophet of Islam did not force anything on Jews nor had any conditional agreement with them. Instead, he adopted the practical method of not coming or interfering in the matters of Jews. This was the true spirit of the Hudaibiyyah spirit, which circumvents any controversy with the opposite party and concentrates on achieving one's goal by adopting unilateral policy. The result of such a policy helped minimise losses with maximum benefits.

The Quran enjoins the Prophet not to yield to unbelievers but to do the utmost with them with the help of the Quran. Here, we can understand that the Quran is referring to ideological struggle. People can be won over by this ideological struggle and not through violent or aggressive means. This, in a way, also indicates that the present Jihad-based armed struggle would be considered a minor Jihad, whereas peaceful struggle is the major Jihad.

Hudaibiyyah refers to greater Jihad as, till that time, the armed struggle had not produced any positive result. Since the Prophet had brought the mission of monotheism, it could not have been materialised with armed struggle. For the ideology to gain deeper roots, it required a peaceful environment. Hudaibiyyah treaty provided much-needed peace, shifting the focus from animosity to exchanging ideas. As a result, within two years, Mecca was conquered without violence. People started entering Islam much faster and without any coercion or force. The model of Hudaibiyyah gives us a practical method to deal with the present state of affairs. The Hudaibiyyah principle is the law of nature which, if put to use, will bring the desired results for both Muslims as well as Non-Muslims.

In the secular world, we can see the application of the above example in the case of Japan during the Second World War. Japan tried to fulfil its national agenda through military means, but by the Second World War, it suffered a severe defeat, and its economy was badly affected. After the drop of the atomic bomb, Japan took an unusual turn by adopting an education policy for the coming decades. Japan dropped its confrontational and revenge-based approach and focused all its efforts on the fields of Education, Research and business. The result was that



Japan became a super economic power and a new world power centre. The economic prowess of Japan today is a well-established fact. Still, many people do not know why Japan took the U-turn, which changed the entire nation and made it a symbol of development and progress.

The spirit of Hudaibiyah can be understood from the Quran, Chapter 48, verse 27, wherein God calls the treaty righteous and, therefore, sends calmness to the hearts of the believers.

The above verse is very clear from its eternal application aspect. The lesson from the contemporary period is that clashes and confrontations between individuals or communities are to be avoided. The only course that will work and be followed is the God-fearing attitude. Those who are fearless of God are doomed for failure, which is mentioned in the Quran as *hamiyat-e-jahiliyya*. Most people facing a provocative situation usually turn negative and lose the ability to think through a calm mind. This negative attitude makes them a case of *hamiyat jahiliya*, as the Quran calls it. Such people will never succeed as they base their decisions on reaction and retribution, and this behaviour is against the spirit of Islam. Meanwhile, God-fearing people base their decisions on deliberation and follow a moral path to manage the situation. They are certainly to succeed, as we saw from the incident of Hudaibiyah as a practical example. The Meccans failed against the peaceable attitude of the Medina people under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad. We can say that the example of Hudaibiyah is not an example of the past. Instead, it is a guiding principle for both Muslims and Non-Muslims. Maulana Wahiduddin rightly writes that in situations of controversy, we should follow the course adopted by Prophet Muhammad, and success would be guaranteed.<sup>xvi</sup>

The Hudaibiyah treaty gave Muslims an extended period of calm and did not worry much about the Quraysh. More importantly, the Quraysh's animosity had united Jews and other Arab tribes against the Muslims. Once the agreement of Peace was signed, the catalyst for hostility abated. However, Muslims initially did not understand when the Prophet told them that God had given them the upper hand. They were disappointed with the turn of events, but the Prophet reminded them how God saved them time and again at the time of the battle of Uhud and then when the enemy assaulted them during the battle of the trench. On each occasion, God saved them despite their harbouring doubts and fear gripping their minds and hearts.

After hearing all these words, Muslims were greatly comforted and realised that the Hudaibiyah treaty was a great success. Earlier, the hostility and persecution of the Meccan people inflicted all sorts of torture on the Prophet and his companions. However, signing the

Peace agreement indirectly meant that Quraysh recognised the legitimacy of the Muslim state and put them on an equal footing. This moral victory opened more doors to disseminate the message of the Prophet, which was earlier being scuttled in every possible way by the opposite party. The defensive Muslims were now actively engaging with the other tribes who were able to understand Islam. They measured the principles applied by the Muslims in their practical life and appreciated their high moral standards. Therefore, they responded favourably to the call the companions gave and began to enter multitudes towards Islam. Prophet began to reach out to people outside Arabia. He wrote to the kings and rulers of neighbouring nations, so countries outside Arabia were introduced to Islam.

### **Another Reason for Peace:**

One more reason proving the peace agreement's practicality was that a sizeable number of people entered Islam in Mecca. They had not left Mecca simply because they hoped that Quraysh would change sooner or later, and secondly, they did not want to strain their relations with their relatives and families. Yet some even wanted to emigrate but were restrained and not given permission by the Meccans. A battle with the Meccans would have meant spilling the blood of their Muslim brethren for their sheer ignorance. This would have been a dark history for Muslims for killing believers; hence, peace was the best possible solution. The aim of Islam anyway was to win over people through conviction and not compulsion; therefore, peace was given importance and priority.<sup>xvii</sup>

After the treaty and the subsequent revelation of Chapter 48 Al-Fath, God mentioned the Hdaybiyyah treaty as a victory that would pave the way for the believers in the first three verses.

Prophet, referring to the above revelation, said that the Surah revealed to him is much dearer to him than all that the sun overlooks. His explanation increased the faith of his companions, who became even more determined to serve Islam.

### **Post Hdaybiyyah :**

The peace from the Hdaybiyyah treaty allowed the Prophet to send his deputations to neighbouring nations. The letters were attested with the seal, Muhammad, the Messenger of God, and were initially sent to Greece, Persia, and other countries. The emperor Heraclius ignored it and set the letter aside as he was high on his victory over Persia. A similar letter was



received by Beni Ghassan, a Christian Arab who then complained to Heraclius, who in turn told him to ignore the letter. The Persian king tore the letter he received, and the governor of Egypt dismissed it by sending presents for the Prophet. The King of Abyssinia, Negus, responded favourably and accepted the embrace of Islam, and the king of Yemen did the same. King Negus also helped Muhammad marry Abu Sufyan's daughter, Umm Habiba, who was in exile in Abyssinia and had lost her husband. King Negus performed the marriage in his absence, which was to have far-reaching consequences in terms of the relationship of the Prophet with the Meccan leader, Abu Sufyan.<sup>xviii</sup>

After the year was over and when the month of Dhul-Qaadah approached, the Prophet began to prepare for Umrah, which is also being discussed in history as 'the compensatory Umrah' or the post-dispute Umrah. He then asked his companions who were with him in Hudaibiyyah not to stay behind. It was estimated that about two thousand men, women and children went with the Prophet. The Umrah was being done on the terms of the Hudaibiyyah Peace agreement, which stipulated that Muslims could do umrah the following year after the treaty was signed.

All this had a significant impression on the people of Mecca, who saw the brotherly behaviour among Muslims. They were astonished at their companions' discipline despite not belonging to one tribe. Their high character left Meccans in admiration when they saw how dedicated Muslims were to the cause of Islam. The Meccans were, in a way, touched by the submission of Muslims towards God, and the Prophet felt that his stay in Mecca was very effective. The Prophet and his companions could freely interact with the Meccans, who could see what kind of society Islam had built in Medina.<sup>xix</sup>

The Hudaibiyyah treaty gives numerous principles which can be applied in the contemporary world. Just like in the pre-Islam period, the vicious cycle of revenge continued for generations with no solution; this could not lead to any positive result for the tribes. So, the Prophet of Islam, by showing a non-violent approach, was able to transform the entire Arabia and demonstrate the power of unilateral peace through the example of the Hudaibiyyah treaty. The present-day Muslims should take the same course of action and apply the Hudaibiyyah principle, which is practical and solution-oriented. There can be no other way to achieve success.

The Prophet showed mankind that Islam teaches to sever ties with ignorance or Jahiliyyah and to guard oneself against all forms of sin. Sin destroys one's personality both in this world and in the hereafter. A Believer must always be watchful lest he strays from the path of goodness and rightness. Another essential principle we learned from the Medina period was the significance of Islamic brotherhood, the bedrock on which Islamic society is founded. This brotherhood keeps all united and makes a believer well-wisher for the other.

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