

مقالات

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Research Article

## The Concept Of Religious Coexistence In Islām

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**Abstract.** In today's globalized world, when different religious communities meet and overlap more frequently than ever before, the idea of religious cohabitation is of utmost importance. One of the most significant faiths in the world, Islam, offers a complex viewpoint on religious harmony that is based on its guiding ideals and past examples. Thus, based on the content analysis approach to the secondary data this article examines the complex facets of religious coexistence in Islam, diving into verses from the *Quran*, prophetic traditions (*Hadith*), and historical instances that shed light on the religion's perspective on coexisting peacefully with followers of other faiths. The analysis shows that Islam encourages a perspective on cohabitation based on the rights to one's beliefs, tolerance, and acceptance of differences between individuals, as well as social justice, humanitarianism, and

brotherhood. Ultimately, a thorough comprehension of the idea of religious tolerance in Islam helps to promote tranquil, accepting societies where people of many faiths can cohabit. The teachings and ideas from Islam's approach to religious cooperation remain relevant for creating a more peaceful global community as civilizations become diverse and interconnected.

**Keywords:** Coexistence, Islam, Religion, Pluralism

## INTRODUCTION

Islām is a religion which distinguishes people, and it does not discriminate between Muslims and other religious people. It gives dignity to humankind only according to justice and equality. This is the basic concept of coexistence in Islām (Asghari, 2023).

Therefore, Islām encourages religious harmony and guides a fruitful relationship with other religious people from its beginning. Teachings of Islām guide its followers to tolerate other religions and their cultures (Usman et al., 2023). So, coexistence which means cooperation, is an important aspect to implement Islām perfectly. Hence, Islām highlighted the coexistence and harmony of humankind in its teaching, and plenty of examples in its history (Wani et al., 2015).

In addition, understanding the purpose for the creation of human beings and the purpose of the advancement of an economy in society requires an appreciation for the coexistence and harmony of Islam. Likewise, it is an unquestionable assurance of the development of human civilization (Achmad, 2013).

Therefore, this article aims to discuss the definition, significance, and principles of religious coexistence in Islam, as well as the examples of religious coexistence considered from the history of Islam.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The methodology employed in this study was secondary data collection and content analysis technique. Secondary data was gathered from a range of sources, including basic Islamic Sources, scholarly journals, books etc. The collected data were then thoroughly categorized and assessed using a rigorous content analysis methodology. Exploring frequent themes, historical illustrations, theological stances, and scholarly interpretations relating to religious coexistence within the Islamic tradition were all part of this process. By drawing conclusions from current academic discourse, the content analysis aided in a thorough investigation of the subject.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Definitions of Religious Coexistence

The Arabic term '*Ta'ayush*' means coexistence, and Mu'jam Al-Arabi' (n.d.) defines it as 'A plural society people live peacefully and harmoniously'. Commonly, coexistence is a compound word with the adjective peaceful or Religious. Both adjectives emphasize coexistence, which means unity and togetherness in a plural society.

Coexistence generally means that living peacefully with others without considering any differences (The Free Dictionary, n.d.). Despite basic differences, a

system of living together with other countries, faiths, etc (Dictionary.com, n.d.). In another way, coexistence is how people remain harmonically with mutual tolerance and acceptance of diverse religions, ethnicities, cultures, belief systems and perspectives (Adesokan, 2015). So, a society or nations with different policies or opposite trends live with mutual peace and understanding without any clashes while maintaining their individuality.

Likewise, religious coexistence implies recognizing the diversity of religious communities and respect for all other religions, and it must be understood that, at least in other religions, there are some facts and beliefs (Yazdani, 2020). Also, religious coexistence is defined as tolerating the religious beliefs, policies, practices of other people even though they contradict us or are erroneous in our point of view. Taking their emotions into account and refraining from hurting them or distracting them from their beliefs or preventing them from making their opinions or carrying out their work, including acting without imposing opinions or repression forced on them, is one of the foremost definitions of religious coexistence (Al-Iwadi, 2013).

Thus, religious coexistence is diverse faiths and cultures that live in the same place and time that mutually accept and understand their faith and cultures. Religious coexistence can be formed in two ways: internal religious coexistence, which implies harmony and unity between the same religious community, and external religious coexistence, which means coexistence between various religious groups. Religious coexistence will be fulfilled when both are established well in a community (Bano et al., 2022).

The phrase 'peaceful coexistence' refers to the rule of healthy competition that does not involve any kind of conflict, and it describes a process that is peaceful, operating within the context of concepts and beliefs that each society and nation in the world adheres to. Accordingly, the purpose of religious coexistence is nothing more than the fostering of peaceful coexistence and the willingness to live in peace (Nazi & Ali, 2018).

It is correct to conclude that religious coexistence is a mutual relationship and a better understanding between people of the same religion or people of different religions living in a particular place.

### **Significant of the Religious Coexistence**

Religion has taken an important role in the progress of every person and society. Religion serves to establish not only an ethical system but also to maintain the principles of everyday life. Religion acts as a tool of socialization (Ashimi, 2020). Religious ideas and movements are enormously significant in today's world (Obaidullah, 2015). Religions impact many countries' social and political movements; therefore, religious coexistence is necessary for the contemporary world.

Religious coexistence is a necessary and inevitable aspect of human life, an individual or a society cannot exist without the cooperation and interaction of others, particularly in a pluralistic context. Coexistence between diverse religious peoples has become a high priority for fulfilling human life in the world (Malović & Vujica, 2021).

God Almighty *Allāh SWT* has created humans with many differences as he mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān:

“O’Mankind! certainly He has created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made into nations and tribes so that you would recognize each other. Verily the most noble of you in the sight of Allāh is the most righteous of you. And Allāh has full knowledge and is well acquainted” (49:13).

These differences must lead the way to the success of mankind. In a diverse religious society, coexistence is essential for building peace and unity among religions and cultures. It is a guarantee of the well-being and the protection of society. In addition, it is a one of the main pillars to the societys’ and countrys’ sustainable development, economic growth, and personal development (Cunningham, 2013). Visibly the conflicts between religions are the greatest barrier to the stability and economic development.

One of the principal reasons for the downturn of economics in developing and undeveloped countries is the lack of peace and harmony in social, political, economic, and international affairs (Obaidullah, 2015). In this concept, religious coexistence is one of the fundamental ways to build prosperous and healthy lives as well as inclusive societies.

Furthermore, religious coexistence is a way to establish the rights of each other within society. It will help decrease misconceptions and progress to a sound relationship among diverse religions. Islām guides living harmoniously with each other and enhance a foster relationship with the people of other religions, faiths, ideologies, etc (Khambali et al., 2013).

As mentioned, religious coexistence is a process to create a strong political relationship with people to foster a harmonious social and nation situation well (Obaidullah, 2015). Therefore, fostering religious coexistence in a pluralistic country should be contemplated.

### **Principles of Religious Coexistence**

In accordance with the teachings of Islam, distinct essential cultural values serve as the primary guiding principles for the religious coexistence of different religions.

### **No Compulsion in Islām**

Islām is a religion that provide obvious and perfect guidance to the whole society. It considers individual freedom and gives human rights perfectly. Islām always accepts that every individual has the right to choose his religion or policy. one who follows different religion or way will not be mutual enemy. Likewise, no rights exist to force their religion, policy or thought. Islām prohibits imposing a religion or policy (Zain, 2015). God Almighty *Allāh* has mentioned this as ‘There is no compulsion in acceptance in religion’ (2:256).

This is a fundamental principle to maintaining religious coexistence among other religious people. They should not be coerced, harassed, or intimidated if other religious people do not want to embrace Islām (Abdullah & Mazahir, 2023). Let

people know the truth of Islām and keep it clear from falsehood by pursuing proper ways and then whether they accept Islām or not is absolutely their own decision.

Had your Lord so willed, all those who are on the earth would have believed. Will you, then, force people into believing? (10:99).

This Qur’ān verse means that Allāh bestowed to humankind the freedom to believe in him or not. This renders all the people born as faithful and obedient, and no disbelief on Earth would have remained.

### **Tolerance**

Tolerance is one of the basic principles in Islām to maintain a harmonious relationship with other religious people. The dictionary has defined the term ‘tolerance’ as the ability to be patient with realizing and accepting anything diverse (Nafisi, 2018).

Further, according to Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries (n.d.), tolerance is the capacity of accept or tolerate anybody, anything, in particular, ideas and actions with which you do not agree and people who are not like you.

Tolerance is being very significant in Islām to the development of the society; Therefore, Islām urges the tolerance and forgiveness in its teachings of Qur’ān and Sunn’ah. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) introduced and implemented tolerance in his period practically.

Once the Prophet said, ‘Best of faith is patience and tolerance’ (Al Silsilah Tul Sahiha, 1495). So, Islām encouraged tolerance on a social level to coincide with any community that desires coexistence.

Presently, tolerance is one of the fundamental aspects of coexistence between various religions. Qurashi mentioned in his book *Samāhath al-Islām*, as Islām is a religion of mercy, Muslims should be easygoing, not one who put someone off, forgiving when he is able to take revenge and tolerant when people make mistakes (Muthaliff et al., 2016). Religious coexistence can never be accomplished without tolerance, and dialog between the different faiths is essential for ensuring peace and unity.

### **Acceptance of Differences**

Diversity is regarded in Islām as evidence of the divine creative act. It encourages the elimination of discrimination of any kind, whether it be based on gender, race, color, culture, or any other conceivable distinction between individuals (Ozdemir, 2021).

God Almighty *Allāh* mentions the differences that he created in the world as evident to the people as he stated in the Holy Qur’ān:

“And of His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours. Indeed, there are Signs in this for the wise” (30:22).

Furthermore, God Almighty *Allāh* revealed that diversity among human is being used for mutual understanding and recognition unless not guided by intolerance or dispute. The Holy Qur'ān says:

O'Mankind! certainly he has created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made into nations and tribes. so that you would recognize each other. Verily the most noble of you in the sight of Allāh is the most righteous of you. And Allāh has full knowledge and is well acquainted. (49:13)

Different languages, religions, and races are the beauty of the world, and it is compulsory for the motion of the world. Therefore, Islām acknowledges pluralism consisting of diversity of cultures, belief systems, and values. Islām urges us to treat others' beliefs and religions with respect even if it does not look right from our point of view. Islām does not encourage blasphemy or insult them or their beliefs or their etiquettes (Sulaiman, 2021). Always guide its believers to respect other ethnic groups or believers and accept sincerely that they have rights like us to follow a religion or beliefs.

The Holy Qur'ān advises that Muslims should avoid insulting, disrespecting other faiths, cultures and belief systems.

“And do not insult those they invoke other than Allāh, lest they insult Allāh in enmity without knowledge. Thus, we have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them about what they used to do” (6:108).

Thus, the acceptance of pluralism and diversity of religion is a testimony of *Allāh* and a fundamental pillar of religious coexistence.

### **Social Justice**

Islām emphasizes social justice as an important value of its principles. It consists vast definitions which have a practical approach. Teachings of Al- Qur'ān and *Sunnah* teach Muslims through their guidelines to treat everyone equally in the presence of law as justice is its main element. Even if there are Muslims or non-Muslims, enemies-friends, relatives-non-relatives, there should be no difference between Muslims on the grounds of justice. *Allāh* has revealed verses in this sense.

“O believers! Stand firm for justice as witnesses for Allāh even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or close relatives. Be they rich or poor, Allāh is best to ensure their interests. So do not let your desires cause you to deviate 'from justice'. If you distort the testimony or refuse to give it, then 'know that' Allāh is certainly All-Aware of what you do” (4:135).

Furthermore, history has indicated that the reasons for the impact of the coexistence of life within the society are discrimination, injustice, favouritism (Faleel, n.d.). Therefore, Allāh has asked Muslims to stand for justice.

“O believers! Stand firm for Allāh and bear true testimony. Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just! That is closer to righteousness. And be mindful of Allāh. Surely Allāh is All-Aware of what you do” (5:8).

According to the Al- Qur’ān verses, Islāmic scholars illustrated the responsibility of Muslims to strive for justice while denying social injustice personally and systematically.

Indeed, there is a strong link in Islām between peace building and justice. Peace has been the product of justice, and justice in Islām does not narrow down to the faith (Ahsan, 2022). Therefore, it has been pointed out that this is the main responsibility of mankind. Inequalities, conflicts, repression, and riots will happen where justice is not accomplished. So, Islām considered justice one of the significant platforms to establish relationships between multi religious people.

### **Doing Good towards Others**

Islām emphasizes doing good and helping others as a fundamental value in its teachings. Also, guide to offer priority regardless of age, race, faith, or creed to weak and needy humans. It always gives preference to the rights of orphans, disabled, poor, and indigent without distinction (Islam, 2018). Therefore, the Qur’ān verse 4:36 emphasizes being kind and do good to others beside parents.

Worship Allah ‘alone’ and associate none with Him. And be kind to parents, relatives, orphans, the poor, near and distant neighbours, close friends, ‘needy’ travellers, and those ‘bondspeople’ in your possession. Surely Allah does not like whoever is arrogant, boastful’.

Likewise, caring for orphans were mentioned many times in the Qur’ān, and nurturing and sponsoring them is an incredibly important act. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH said that,

a house which an orphan treated well is the best house among Muslims, and the worst house among Muslims is a house which there is an orphan who is being handle badly’(Sunan Ibn Majah, 3679).

Also, the Qur’ān mentions,

Have you seen the one who denies the ‘final’ Judgment? That is the one who repulses the orphan and does not encourage the feeding of the poor’(107:1-3) and ‘If the relatives (who are not heirs) and the orphans and the needy are present at the time of distribution, give them some of it, and speak to them in fair words’ (4:8).

The above verses and the Prophet’s teachings define distinctly about caring and helping needy people and there is no single verse distinguishes between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Significantly, Muslims are obliged to treat orphans, poor, disabled, homeless, and needy lovingly and kindly without any differences. This is a primary objective of

having a positive interaction with other communities of faith in a different religious, cultural community.

### **Brotherhood**

Humans are superior and dignified creation among all creatures. Humans have been given dignity because human being not about their faith or belief. Allah mentioned in holy Qur'ān in many verses, 'Humanity had once been one community. (2:256) and 'Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord' (21:92).

The above verses of the Qur'ān emphasize that humans are a single nation of creation of God Almighty Allah. Sūrah al- al-Nisā' 4:1 clearly states that Allah created the humans from a single soul,

O humanity! Be mindful of your Lord Who created you from a single soul, and from it He created its mate, and through both He spread countless men and women. And be mindful of Allah—in Whose Name you appeal to one another—and 'honour' family ties. Surely Allah is ever Watchful over you".

This is strong evidence that all human beings are created by the same creator and thus, belong to one greater brotherhood. Islām has stressed brotherhood and mutual collaboration in various ways since unity and brotherhood are tightly connected.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has declared in his farewell address regarding this universal brotherhood comprehensively, 'O'people, your creator is one and your father is one, all of you are from Adam and he was created by sand. There are no Arab has superiority over non-Arab, and no black person has superiority over white person, other than piety (Azeez & Ishola, 2018).

Hence, *Islām* has mentioned the universal brotherhood without any discrimination between mankind, such as religion, race or colour, culture as one of the main obligations of building a harmonious society. Maintaining a healthy brotherhood as per the teachings and guidance of *Islām* would lead to a coexist life in a diverse society.

### **Religious Co-existence in the History of *Islām***

Islāmic history has plenty of applied examples coexist life among Muslims and non-Muslims. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exemplifies a person maintaining co-existence in a pluralistic society. Islām makes co-existence as an undivided sector in its history and political concept. The Prophet has created a powerful and a moral nation in Medina. He introduced the human values of Islām and the basic principles to establish life in a pluralistic society through the constitution of Madina (Zain, 2015).

The Madina constitution established social pluralism, justice, equality, and human rights among every single citizen in a multi-ethnic community composed of Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Pagans. Therefore, the Madina constitution is known as not only the first written constitution but also the first example of constitutional



law in society (Yildirim, 2006). It contains realistic and executed examples to build the religious co-existence in a multi-religious community.

In the Islāmic state of Madina, this constitution stipulated the values of co-existence such as pluralism, justice, and equality, irrespective of their religion. At the arrival of Prophet Muhammad PBUH in Madina, its population was 10,000 and had been divided into around 22 tribes. Also, at the outset of fact, as in notably, 45% of the total population in Madina consisted of non-Muslim Arabs, 40% consisted of Jews, and only 15% were Muslims.(Shah, 2012)

The constitution of Madina considered every Muslim with equal respect and dignity. It demolished the contrast between citizens and migrants; also, it does enables citizen to have dominance over migrants or vice versa. The second article of the constitution mentioned that Muslims and non-Muslims of Madina are considered as *ummā* (one whole community). Furthermore, Madina constitution acknowledges similar diversity and grants religious freedom. The article 25<sup>th</sup> of constitution stated that 'Jews and Muslims are free to practice their own religion' (Khan, 2006).

According to the study of Muhammad Hamidullah, the Madina constitution is divided into two parts: article 1 -23 as one part, which addresses mutual relations among Muslims and article 24 - 47 consist of rules to regulate inter-communal affairs among Muslims and Jews (Khan, 2006). It is a clear and absolute establishment of a pluralistic community. Therefore, Madina is known as the particle example of co-existence between different faiths and tribes in Islām (Islam, 2018). As William White mentioned, peace established in Madina not through dominance but through the fundamental concept of co-existence with mutual tolerance, love, reason, and god belief.(Shah, 2012) Ramadan Hisham also mentioned that the Madina constitution established the methods for a peaceful life among diverse groups living as one community but not assimilating to the religion, language, or culture.

The treaty with Najran Christians was another milestone at the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to coexist with other religious peoples. Christians lived at the time of the Prophet in the area called Najran, which was situated in Saudi Arabia. The Prophet sent letters to community leaders at that time and invited them to embrace Islām. As a result of that, few Christians embrace Islām. After the second attempt by Prophet Muhammad, a group of Najran Christians came to Madina to visit the Prophet, and he opened the door of the mosque for them to conduct prayers in their own way (Considine, 2018). This is one of the remarkable examples of religious diversity in Islām. When they were leaving Medina, Najran's Christians had a treaty to protect their lives, freedom, and happiness with Prophet Mohammed.

Looking closely at this treaty, it encourages religious freedom, moral freedom, community building, and development and incorporates all the values of an inclusive society, such as collaboration, honesty, integration, mutual respect, tolerance, economic and political insurance, and cultural diversity (Zain, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

Islam is a religion that provides complete guidance to the entire humanity. One of the primary goals of Islamic teaching is to appreciate all people regardless of their faiths or beliefs. As a result, its teaching emphasises religious co-existence

among all religious people and discourages discrimination. The Islamic teachings make it abundantly clear that the principles are to be followed, and they stress the significance of peacefully coexisting with members of other religions in order to create a harmonious nation despite the prevalence of pluralism. But improving people's understandings and bringing those understandings into practise is the challenge that needs to be overcome in order to bring about a sustainable change.

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