

# PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE MUSLIM SOCIETY

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# ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to describe the Islamic teachings regarding coexistence and human bonding, and their indispensability to *al-Falah* (human success and development). The study is divided into five sections dealing with the meaning of coexistence, the need for peaceful coexistence, the necessary requirements and tools for peaceful coexistence, categorization of peaceful coexistence, and roadblocks to peaceful coexistence. The study contends that: first, coexistence and human bonding are vital part of human success and development; second, human beings are relational beings, meaning they have a natural tendency to live in society harmoniously with others; third, human beings share common goals and objectives that necessitate coexistence with one another; fourth, one of the biggest problems faced by the Muslim *ummah* today is disharmony;

fifth, there are many obstacles to peaceful coexistence of various ethnic, racial and religious groups in our communities today that should be addressed. Hence, further studies on peaceful coexistence are deemed significant. This study is based on a library research and employs a qualitative approach. It is descriptive in the sense that it explains what the Qur'an and Hadith say about peaceful coexistence, and analytical because it shows why peaceful coexistence or "a living together in peace rather than constant hostility" is important. The translation of the *ayat* (verses) of the Qur'an related to this study is extracted from the work of Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text and Translation*. By the end of this paper, one should be able to: first, have some idea of what it means to peacefully coexist with one another; second, distinguish between the Muslim *ummah* and other *umam* (nation); third, understand why human beings should coexist with one another.

**Keywords:** coexistence, *al-Falah*, *wasatiyyah*, Muslim *ummah*, human bonding

# Research Questions

- 1) What is peaceful coexistence?
- 2) Why do human beings need to coexist peacefully?
- 3) What are the necessary requirements and tools for peaceful coexistence?
- 4) What are the fundamental principles of peaceful coexistence of human beings?

# MAIN OBJECTIVES OF ISLAM

The following are some of the main objectives of Islam:

- 1) To establish a united, inclusive and consolidated Muslim community, that is, a community in which people of different races and ethnicities live in mutual tolerance because of common beliefs and rituals: “And verily this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore, fear Me (and no other).” (Qur’an, 23:52).
- 2) To purify human souls from the spiritual diseases of the heart, such as hatred, malice and the intention to harm others:  
“Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it!” (Qur’an, 91:9-10),  
“The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, but only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart,” (Qur’an, 26:88-89). The Islamic term used for this is *tazkiyat al-Nafs*.  
“Do not hate each other, do not envy each other, do not turn away from each other, but rather be servants of Allah as brothers.” (Sahih Muslim 2559, Grade: *Sahih*)

3) To build peaceful and harmonious interpersonal relationships and also human relationship with other living beings and the environment: "Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men have earned, that (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from Evil)." (Qur'an, 30:41).

4) To liberate people from oppression, release them from bondage of their desires and provide them with the means for their happiness: "By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right. Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it!" (Qur'an, 91:7-10).

5) To provide mankind with light that leads from the darkness to the path of peace: "Wherewith Allah guideth all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leadeth them out of darkness, by His will, unto the light, guideth them to a path that is straight." (Qur'an, 5:16).

# MEANING OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Peaceful coexistence is defined as;

- 1) “recognition of the right of the other group to exist peacefully with its differences, acceptance of the other group as a legitimate and an equal partner with whom disagreements have to be resolved in nonviolent ways.” (Bar-Tal, 2008, p.1).
- 2) having “a relationship between persons or groups in which none of the parties is trying to destroy the other.” (Kriesberg, 1998).
- 3) “a state in which two or more groups are living together while respecting their differences and resolving their conflicts nonviolently.” (Khaminwa, July 2003).

# THE NEED FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Peaceful coexistence is needed in all ages in order to:

- 1) Bring peace in social relationships at all levels.
- 2) Face the challenges of life collectively.
- 3) Guarantee the survival of every race and ethnicity. Here it is important to note that humans live in close proximity with each other just like the different organisms. The survival of human race depends on the survival of every race and ethnicity, and the ecosystems.
- 4) Promote wellbeing and progress.
- 5) Sustain development of the people of diverse cultures.
- 6) Avoid conflicts. Here it should be noted that conflicts are harmful to individuals and society.
- 7) Protect the planet.

# NECESSARY REQUIREMENTS AND TOOLS FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Justice, forgiveness and reconciliation are tools for peaceful coexistence while its requirements are as follows:

- 1) Creation of awareness
- 2) Education
- 3) Viewing others as having the same right to exist and live in peace.
- 4) Acknowledgement of the differences among people. Their differences could be “in the realm of goals, values, ideology, religion, race, nationality, ethnicity, culture, and other domains.”
- 5) Implementation of core values.
- 6) Communication skills.
- 7) Managing conflicts in an amicable manner.

# CATEGORIZATION OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Coexistence is categorized into:

- 1) Peaceful coexistence in marriage
- 2) Peaceful coexistence of mankind
- 3) Peaceful coexistence of the members of the Muslim ummah
- 4) Peaceful coexistence of mankind and the environment

# ROADBLOCKS TO COEXISTENCE

Things that are disruptive to unity/coexistence

- 1) Racial superiority (Ethnic or racial supremacist fanaticism)
- 2) Sectarianism (Political, ideological fanaticism)
- 3) Ignorance
- 4) Nationalism/loyalty to state
- 5) Arrogance, prejudice and hatred.