
Interfaith Harmony and Its Contemporary Relevance

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Abstract

Interfaith harmony has become a pressing need in today's increasingly globalized and interconnected world, where cultural and religious diversity is more visible and influential than ever before. This article explores the concept of interfaith harmony and its contemporary relevance, particularly in the face of rising intolerance, extremism, and sociopolitical polarization. It delves into the moral, spiritual, and social foundations that support peaceful coexistence among followers of different religions. The discussion includes historical precedents, Islamic perspectives on pluralism and tolerance, and the roles of dialogue, education, and mutual respect in fostering unity. It also highlights how modern societies can benefit from embracing interfaith cooperation to build more inclusive, empathetic, and resilient communities. Ultimately, the article emphasizes that promoting interfaith harmony is not merely an idealistic goal but a necessary strategy for global peace, social justice, and sustainable development in the 21st century.

Keywords: Interfaith Harmony, Religious Tolerance, Interfaith Dialogue, Islamic Perspective on Interfaith

Introduction

Interfaith harmony is not merely a topic, but in today's era, it is a significant collective and practical necessity. The people living in our society are deeply

interconnected with one another. This profound connection that has neither been artificially created through deliberate effort nor is it merely coincidental or temporary. Rather, it has been nurtured over generations through religious and national training in tolerance of differences, and through a consistent expression of commitment at every level.

In this context, what has always proven beneficial is the willingness to accept differences and the deep concern for the preservation of the honor and dignity of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). The Noble Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

تَرَكْتُ فِيكُمْ أَمْرَيْنِ لَنْ تَضِلُّوا مَا تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِمَا كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَسُنَّتِي⁽¹⁾.

"I am leaving among you two things; as long as you hold onto them firmly, you will never go astray: Allah's Book (the Quran) and my Sunnah (the way/teachings).

All religions of the world have established sound principles for the betterment of society and community and have tried to establish connections among individuals. Each religion based its foundation on some form of human relationship — some on nationality, some on race, and others on homeland. The unique feature of Islam is that it set aside all such distinctions and gave a dignified status to individual human identity. As mentioned in the noble Hadith:

"حرام عليكم الدماء و الاموالكم"⁽²⁾

There are many such Hadiths as well; in short, it is impossible to justify oppression against any individual on the basis of religion or the state. Allah Almighty says:

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ⁽³⁾

"And they believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you, and they have firm faith in the Hereafter."

¹ مالك بن انس، الموطأ، كتاب القدر، باب ما جاء في كتاب الله وسنة نبيه ﷺ، حديث رقم: 1594، تحقيق: محمد فؤاد عبد الباقي، ناشر: دار احياء التراث العربي، بيروت، لبنان، طبع ثانی: 1985ء، ص: 899

² ترمذی، ابو عیسیٰ محمد، باب: باب ما جاء وماؤکم وَاَمْوَالُکُمْ عَلَیْکُمْ حَرَامٌ، رقم الحديث: 2159

³ البقره: 4

In an Islamic state, non-Muslims are granted the same civil rights as Muslims. No individual is allowed to harm another's place of worship, nor can anyone be compelled to act against their religious principles. Considering someone else's needs as secondary to one's own and violating their rights constitutes negligence and injustice in the light of Shariah. Maulana Maududi (may Allah have mercy on him) states:

“An Islamic state does not assume the responsibility of non-Muslims on behalf of itself or its Muslim citizens, rather it assumes this responsibility on behalf of God and His Messenger. This responsibility is of such magnitude that even if Muslims are massacred in a non-Muslim country, we cannot retaliate by harming a single hair of the dhimmis (non-Muslim citizens) residing in our country. No parliament in an Islamic government has the authority to usurp their Shariah-guaranteed rights.”⁽⁴⁾

Muslims have always set exemplary standards of harmony and tolerance throughout history — whether it was during the time of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, or under the rule of the Umayyads and Abbasids. Even in countries where Muslims have been in the minority, they have not been ignored. Instead, their fundamental rights have been safeguarded, their religious identities preserved, and it has never been deemed permissible to demolish their places of worship or deprive them of basic rights.

A recent example of this is the construction of a mosque in "Barber Cuttery Land," where Muslims were attacked and martyred while praying. In Canada, Muslims do not feel safe even in their own homes, and religious discrimination is on the rise. However, in many developed nations where Muslims have lived for centuries, they are treated with tolerance and respect.

Pakistan is a country where people are granted full freedom regardless of religion, race, language, or color. The Islamic vision of Pakistan reflects this inclusiveness

⁴ مودودی، ابوالاعلیٰ، اسلامی ریاست، اسلامک پبلیکیشنز، لاہور، ص 506

— as emphasized by Quaid-e-Azam, who declared minorities as an integral part of the nation. He clearly stated that the white color in Pakistan’s flag represents the minorities and ensures the protection of the rights of all citizens living in Pakistan.

Conceptual and Terminological Review:

In the Urdu language, the term "Ham Aahangi" (Harmony) is commonly expressed through words like "*Mutabiqat*" (compatibility), "*Muwafiqat*" (agreement), "*Masawat*" (equality), "*Qurbat*" (closeness), and "*Ittihad*" (unity). In Arabic, equivalent terms include "*Ittihad*" (unity), "*Tawafuq*" (accord), and "*Tafahum*" (mutual understanding). In English, it is referred to as "*Harmony*", "*Coordinated conduct*", or "*Come into agreement*", while in Persian, the word "*Aahang Shudan*" is used, which implies becoming attuned or synchronized with one another.

All these terms fundamentally convey the idea of promoting mutual harmony, interaction, and solidarity.

Terminologically, *interfaith harmony* refers to a state in which followers of different religions and faiths show respect for each other’s beliefs, customs, and values, and foster peaceful coexistence based on mutual understanding, tolerance, and patience. Allah said in Quran:

"لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ" ⁽⁵⁾

“For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.”

This blessed verse teaches the values of religious freedom, tolerance, and respect for diverse beliefs. Furthermore, the *Charter of Madinah* (Mithāq-e-Madīnah) stands as a historical example where the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) granted equal civil rights to Jews, polytheists, and Muslims under a unified agreement in Madinah, demonstrating a practical model of religious coexistence.

All divine religions promote justice, equality, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence,

as demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) when he sent Ja'far ibn Abi Talib (RA) to the court of Negus (Najāshī). There, Ja'far recited verses from Surah Maryam, which were so powerful that the Christian priests in the court were moved to tears.

This event proves that dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect for shared spiritual values among different religions are essential components of interfaith harmony.

As Allah the Almighty says:

"وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ"⁽⁶⁾

"And do not argue with the People of the Book except in a way that is best."

This verse instructs Muslims to engage with non-Muslims with kindness and respect. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

"مَنْ قَتَلَ مُعَاهِدًا لَمْ يَرِحْ رَائِحَةَ الْجَنَّةِ"⁽⁷⁾

"Whoever kills a Dhimmi (non-Muslim citizen under Muslim rule) will not even smell the fragrance of Paradise."

This Hadith clearly indicates that Islam emphasizes the protection of the rights of non-Muslims. Article 1 of the United Nations Charter stresses the promotion of "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms," which includes religious tolerance⁽⁸⁾. According to Article 20 of the Constitution of Pakistan, every citizen has the right to profess, practice, and propagate his religion.⁽⁹⁾

The Concept of Harmony in Islam:

The Creator of the universe sent prophets for the guidance and nurturing of humanity. All the prophets preached the message of *Tawheed* (the Oneness of

⁶ التوبة: 46

⁷ محمد بن اسماعيل البخاري، الصحيح البخاري، كتاب الجزية والموادعة، حديث رقم 3166، تحقيق: محمد فؤاد عبد الباقي، (بيروت: دار ابن كثير، 1987)، ص: 1208.

⁸ 17 اقوام متحدہ، اقوام متحدہ کا چارٹر، سان فرانسسکو: اقوام متحدہ، 1945، تاریخ استفادہ: 25 مئی 2025 <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>

⁹ پاکستان، پاکستان کا آئین (اسلام آباد: نیشنل اسمبلی پاکستان، 1973)، آرٹیکل 20.

Allah). Those who accepted this message succeeded, while those who rejected it were declared disbelievers. Allah the Almighty says:

"إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا" -⁽¹⁰⁾

"We showed him the way, whether he chooses to be grateful or ungrateful."

At another place, Allah the Almighty says:

"شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ"⁽¹¹⁾

Allah has ordained for you the same religion which He enjoined upon Noah (peace be upon him), and that which We have revealed to you (O Prophet ﷺ), and that which We enjoined upon Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them): "Establish the religion and do not be divided therein." This is the same religion that has always been followed by all the Prophets and is the one approved by Allah — and its name is Islam.

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ¹²

Indeed, the only religion acceptable to Allah is Islam

In religion, there is no room for force or coercion. People are given the freedom to choose their preferred and successful ways so that they can realize who follows the correct path and who does not. Islam is a universal and all-encompassing religion; its teachings are for all of humanity. Islam does not address a particular class, region, civilization, or race, but instead speaks to all humans; it is a religion of mercy for everyone.

The Divine Revelation (the Qur'an) states something along these lines: *"My mercy extends over all things in the world,"* as a result of which people receive blessings such as sustenance, health, and well-being. Similarly, the Holy Qur'an has

¹⁰ - الدهر: 3

¹¹ القرآن، 26: 13

¹² آل عمران: 19

designated the final Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him), as a mercy for all worlds, with the divine command:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ¹³

"And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds."

In Surah Al-Ahzab, it is also said:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ¹⁴

"Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad, peace be upon him) you have a good example."

This means that only the person of the Prophet (peace be upon him) embodies the perfect example and complete model in every aspect of life—beliefs, thoughts, worship, dealings, morals, society, politics, economics, and every field of life. The Prophet (peace be upon him) has said: *"I am a mercy personified, sent by Allah."*

The divine command states:

جَعَلْنَكُمْ سُعُوبًا وَ قَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَكُمْ مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَى وَ خَيْرٌ¹⁵

"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted."

This verse highlights the great principle of equality: that the measure of a person's honor and nobility is not their tribe, clan, or homeland, but their piety. Allah has not created different tribes or nations to boast over one another; rather, their purpose is simply to establish some divisions for mutual recognition among humans.

¹³ القرآن، 21:108

¹⁴ القرآن 33: 21

¹⁵ القرآن، 49:13

"Interfaith Harmony in the Light of the Seerah (Life and Character) of the Prophet Peace Be Upon Him:

Allah Almighty has included mutual interaction and social life within human nature. From Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) to the Seal of the Prophets, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), all the prophets have taught the world about peace, tolerance, and mutual respect. In the present era, wherever Muslims reside, they are required to establish social, cultural, and community relations with non-Muslim nations and followers of different faiths. Islam is a religion of nature and guides relations with individuals of different religions, civilizations, and perspectives. In the light of the Seerah (life and character) of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), exemplary conduct and good relations with non-Muslims serve as a model. The practical life of the Prophet (peace be upon him) prominently features justice, patience, mercy, and good manners. Allah the Almighty states in the Holy Quran:

تُمْ جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَىٰ شَرِيعَةٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ¹⁶

"Then We have laid upon you the religion of the right path. So follow it, and do not follow the desires of those who do not know."

Islam is a universal and complete system of life that teaches all humanity peace, justice, and international brotherhood. Islam has established social relations on the foundations of high morals and respect for human dignity. The Seerah (life and character) of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) is the best practical example of this.

Treaty with the People of Najran:

After the political and social foundations of Islam were strengthened, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) made a treaty with the Christians of Najran, which

¹⁶القرآن، 18:45

is an excellent example of interfaith harmony. In this treaty, non-Muslims were given religious, social, and legal protections. ⁽¹⁷⁾ Here are some of the most important points of this treaty:

1. Non-Muslims were guaranteed protection of their faith and religion, ensuring their beliefs were safeguarded.
2. Their places of worship were protected.
3. The protection of their religious leaders was declared a duty of the Islamic government.
4. Non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic state would have equal religious and legal rights.
5. The honor, life, and property of non-Muslims are the responsibility of the Muslim state.
6. Non-Muslims would choose their own religious leaders.
7. All rights related to their places of worship would be respected. ⁽¹⁸⁾

Permission for Christians to Worship in the Prophet's Mosque:

The delegation of Christians from Najran, consisting of sixty riders, included "Bishop Abul Harith," the priest of the church, along with the judge and ruler of the region called "Aym," whose title was "Abd al-Masih" and who was also known by the honorific "Sayyid." In addition, twenty-four prominent Christian leaders were part of the group. This delegation arrived in the presence of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) at the time of 'Asr (afternoon). This was their time of worship (possibly a Sunday, which Christians consider sacred and dedicate to worship).

They requested permission to perform their worship, and the Noble Prophet (peace

¹⁷ بخاری، محمد بن اسماعیل، صحیح بخاری، کتاب المغازی، باب ھِجْرَةِ النَّحْلِ بِجَنْزَانَ، رقم الحديث: 4380

¹⁸ ماخذ: دہشت گردی اور فتنہ خوارج، شیخ الاسلام، ص 199

and blessings be upon him) graciously allowed them to pray in his mosque. They then turned toward the east and performed their prayers according to their religious tradition. Some Muslims, upon seeing these Christians praying in the Prophet's Mosque (peace and blessings be upon him) in their own manner, tried to stop them, but the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) forbade them from doing so.¹⁹

Treaty of Hdaybiyyah and Religious Harmony:

During the time of the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah, the terms of the peace agreement were being finalized, and at certain stages, such situations arose where voices began to raise from both sides. Despite the harsh tone adopted by the disbelievers, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), considering the long-term and genuine interests that could benefit Islam in the future, refrained from some Sunnah (traditions) and recommended actions. For example, when the terms were agreed upon and it was time to draft the treaty, the disbelievers objected to starting the written document with 'باسمك اللهم' (In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful). However, their objection was unfounded and a demonstration of stubbornness. The situation had reached a point where the treaty could have fallen apart. Despite this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) adopted a gentle approach and maintained harmony by instructing that only 'Bismik Allah' (In Your Name, Allah) be written instead of the full phrase, thus preventing the situation from escalating into tension."⁽²⁰⁾

At that very moment, when it came time to write the names of the parties involved in the agreement, Hazrat Ali al-Murtaza (may Allah be pleased with him) wrote the honorable name of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) along with the words "Messenger of Allah" — "*Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah.*" However,

¹⁹ رَحْمَةُ الْعَالَمِينَ ﷺ، محمد سليمان منصور پوری، ج: 1، ص: 182

²⁰ سيرة الرسول ﷺ، محمد حسين، هیکل، ص: 464

the disbelievers expressed their hostile attitude by objecting once again to these words.

It was difficult and emotionally distressing for Hazrat Ali (may Allah honor his face) to alter these words. Yet, even in that situation, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), keeping in view the far-reaching consequences, agreed to write "Muhammad bin Abdullah" instead. By accepting the unjust demand of the disbelievers, he prevented the situation from worsening.⁽²¹⁾

This was the Prophetic strategy and the beautiful example of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that due to his religious harmony and tolerance, the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, which the Qur'an referred to as a "فتح مبین" (22) (*Fath Mubīn*), became the gateway to future victories of Islam. In the time that followed, people began entering the fold of Islam in large numbers and attaching themselves to the blessed mission of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Within a short span, the radiant rays of the sun of Islam began to illuminate all corners of the world, and its message of peace spread across the globe.

Treatment of the Jews of Khaybar:

The Jews of Madinah, including the Jews of Khaybar, left no stone unturned in their enmity toward Islam. After the migration to Madinah, they joined forces with the Quraysh of Makkah and wove a web of conspiracies against the Islamic state. Whenever any Muslim fell into their hands, they would subject him to severe oppression. It became their daily practice to insult and blaspheme the noble person of the Prophet ﷺ, causing deep pain to his blessed heart and to the Muslims.

Yet, despite all this, during the conquest of Khaybar, when some Muslims released the Jews' livestock and drove them away, the Prophet ﷺ expressed his displeasure at this act. This is narrated by Hazrat Khalid bin Walid (may Allah be pleased with

²¹ شبلی نعمانی، سیرت النبی ﷺ، جلد 1، ص: 423، ترتیب و تکمیل: سید سلیمان ندوی، (لاہور: مجلس ترقی ادب، 2010).

²² الفتح: 1

him) said:

غزونا مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم غزوة خيبر فاسرع الناس في حظائر يهود فامرني ان انادى الصلوة --- ثم قال ايها الناس انكم قد اسرعتهم في حظائر يهود الا لا تحل اموال المعاهدين ابجقها.²³

We participated in the Battle of Khaybar along with the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him). The people rushed towards the properties of the Jews, so the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded me to announce the prayer. Then he said:

“O people! Indeed, you have hastened towards the properties of the Jews. Behold! The wealth of the people under a treaty (Mu'ahidīn) is not lawful except with due right.”

This narration is also reported in the following words:

الا واني احرم عليكم اموال المعاهدين بغير حقها.⁽²⁴⁾

“Behold! I declare the wealth of the people under a treaty (Mu'ahidīn) unlawful upon you except with its due right.” (Also reported elsewhere)

This conduct of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was a model and practical example for the noble Companions (may Allah be pleased with them). Accordingly, after the blessed passing of the Prophet (peace be upon him), when the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs began, those trained in the school of Prophethood upheld the same example of the Messenger (peace be upon him). During their respective caliphates, they maintained religious harmony and granted non-Muslim citizens all the rights that Muslims were entitled to in an Islamic state. Their honor and dignity, wealth and property, places of worship, trade, and businesses were protected in the same way the rights of Muslims were safeguarded.

²³ احمد بن حنبل، المستدرج، جلد 1، ص: 89، حديث رقم: 16362، تحقيق: شعيب الأرنؤوط، (بيروت: مؤسسة الرسالة، 2001)

²⁴ - أيضاً

Farewell Sermon (Khutbah Hajjatul Wida):

On the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage (Hajjatul Wida), the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said:

"Your blood, your wealth, and your honor are sacred and forbidden upon one another, just as this day (of Hajj) is sacred."

This means that just as the day of Hajjatul Wida is extremely sacred for Muslims and no one can even think of violating its sanctity, in the same way, it is absolutely prohibited to shed the blood of any Muslim unjustly, to seize his wealth unlawfully, or to violate his honor.

Every person has the right to act upon their opinion. The Shari'ah (Islamic law) has always emphasized religious harmony, tolerance, and good conduct within the Islamic society. In Surah Al-Ma'idah, Allah the Almighty says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ ءَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۚ
ءَاغْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ²⁵

"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah as bearers of justice, and do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just—that is nearer to piety. And fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is well aware of all that you do."

This verse forms a fundamental basis for **religious tolerance**, as it equates tolerance with justice. The meaning is clear: whether someone differs from you in religion, culture, language, or ethnicity—whether they are friend or foe—you must deal with them justly. No discrimination should be made based on their faith or identity, and no form of oppression or injustice should be committed against them. The verse warns that enmity towards any nation or group must not lead you to abandon justice; rather, justice must be upheld in all circumstances.

Islam not only recognizes the religious rights of all humans but also instructs

Muslims to guide them with wisdom and to invite them toward the divine system, so that peace and harmony may prevail in this world, and a tranquil life may be attained in the Hereafter. It is a historical fact that Islam teaches religious harmony, tolerance, peace, and respect for humanity. It is the only religion in the world that teaches the principle of peaceful coexistence.

Islam invites others to faith through dialogue and reasoning, not through force. It teaches respect for other religions and honors all prophets—indeed, it teaches respect for all religious leaders and their followers. The teachings of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the Prophet of Mercy, Muhammad (peace be upon him), are a guarantee of peace and a beacon of guidance for all of humanity.

Today, in a world craving for tolerance, patience, peace, interfaith dialogue, and religious harmony, humanity must turn to Islam and the character of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) for guidance. Without doubt, these are the true foundations for respect for humanity and the real guarantors of global peace and security.

Historical Examples of Interfaith Harmony:

1. The Golden Age of Al-Andalus (Spain): *Convivencia*

- **Explanation:**

From the 8th to the 15th century, Al-Andalus (modern-day Spain) witnessed a unique era of interfaith tolerance and coexistence among Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The city of Córdoba was the epicenter of this harmony, where people of all three religions lived together, worked cooperatively, and actively participated in intellectual and cultural activities. This period is known as *Convivencia*, meaning “living together.” During this time, Muslims, Christians, and Jews collaborated in fields such as science, literature, medicine, and philosophy. For example, the

libraries of Córdoba housed and translated texts from all three faiths, promoting interreligious dialogue and understanding.⁽²⁶⁾

2. Mughal India: Akbar the Great's *Ibadat Khana* and *Din-i Ilahi*

Explanation:

Mughal Emperor Akbar the Great established the *Ibadat Khana* (House of Worship) in 1575, inviting scholars and thinkers from various religions to engage in open discussions about their beliefs. During this period, Akbar laid the foundation of *Din-i Ilahi* (Religion of God), a new spiritual philosophy based on the common elements of different faiths. The goal was to promote harmony and tolerance among followers of diverse religions.⁽²⁷⁾ When we speak of *Din-i Ilahi*, it reflects a particular ideological system introduced by Akbar—sometimes referred to as *Din-i Akbari*. This term was first documented by Abul Fazl in his book *Akbarnama*. However, the name *Din-i Ilahi* is more commonly used to describe this system. It was not intended to be a completely new religion but rather part of Akbar's broader ethical and political strategy to unify his diverse empire. The term *Din-i Akhnari* does not appear in historical sources and may be a mispronunciation or misunderstanding of *Din-i Akbari* or *Din-i Ilahi*.

3. The Ottoman Empire: The *Millet* System

Explanation:

In the Ottoman Empire, various non-Muslim communities were granted autonomy under the *Millet* system. Each *millet* had its own religious leader who oversaw the community's religious, educational, and legal matters. This arrangement allowed followers of different religions to live according to their own beliefs and laws, thus

²⁶ Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2002), 15–66.

²⁷ Smith, Vincent A. *Akbar the Great Mogul, 1542–1605*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917

fostering interfaith harmony and peaceful coexistence within the empire.⁽²⁸⁾

4. Jordan: *The Amman Message*

Explanation:

In 2004, King Abdullah II of Jordan launched *The Amman Message*, aimed at curbing the misuse of *takfir* (declaring someone a non-believer) and promoting harmony among different Islamic sects. More than 200 scholars from over 50 countries signed this declaration, highlighting the importance of unity within the Muslim world and encouraging respect and tolerance between different schools of thought.⁽²⁹⁾ This initiative significantly contributed to both interfaith and intra-faith understanding and cooperation.

These examples demonstrate that interfaith harmony has deep historical roots and that pluralism, dialogue, and mutual respect have been successfully practiced in various cultures and eras.

19th Century Reforms (Tanzimat):

- In the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire initiated a series of reforms to modernize its state system, known as the "Tanzimat." These reforms included two significant decrees:
- The 1839 decree "Hatt-ı Şerif of Gülhane"
- The 1856 decree "Hatt-ı Hümayun"

The purpose of these reforms was to grant equal civil rights to all citizens of the empire, both Muslims and non-Muslims. They encompassed principles such as the protection of life, property, religious freedom, and legal equality. As a result, people of different faiths gained dignified and equal status within the empire,

²⁸ Gavrilis, George, and Barkey, Karen. "The Ottoman Millet System: Non-Territorial Autonomy and Its Contemporary Legacy." PONARS Eurasia, January 7, 2016

²⁹ "The Statement Issued by the International Islamic Conference – Amman Message," Amman Message, accessed May 15, 2025

<https://ammanmessage.com/the-statement-issued-by-the-international-islamic-conference>

promoting interfaith harmony in Ottoman society.⁽³⁰⁾

The Intellectual and Commercial Contributions of Jews and Christians:

In the Ottoman Empire, not only Muslims but also Jewish and Christian minorities were active in fields such as scholarship, medicine, finance, and trade. Many Jews and Christians served the empire as doctors, translators, financial advisors, and court officials. Some of them even rose to high-ranking positions within the empire. Thanks to these contributions, minorities not only gained respect and dignity in the empire but also fostered an environment of interfaith tolerance and practical cooperation within Ottoman society.⁽³¹⁾

The Present Era and Benefiting from the Prophet's (ﷺ) Life

If we take a deep look at the current regional and global situation, it becomes clear that all of humanity is engulfed in religious extremism, intolerance, and moral decline. The paths of moderation and balance have been abandoned, and people have fallen victim to extremes. In such turbulent times, if there is any ray of hope for salvation and success, it lies solely in sincerely following the teachings of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and his noble life. This discussion presents some practical suggestions and recommendations through which the Muslim Ummah can once again attain a position of leadership and guidance:

1. **Following the Prophet's (ﷺ) Life:** In the present era, the entire Muslim Ummah must wholeheartedly adopt the Prophet's (ﷺ) life as part of their individual and collective lives to attain success in this world and the hereafter.

³⁰ Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1876* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 25–47

³¹ Molly Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 91–113

2. **Inclusion in Educational Curriculum:** The Prophet's (ﷺ) life should be made a compulsory part of school, college, and university curricula so that the younger generation can become familiar with his noble life and follow it.
3. **Establishing a Just System:** In light of the Prophet's (ﷺ) life, justice and fairness must be practically implemented in society so that every individual feels secure and dignified.
4. **Religious Tolerance and Unity:** Based on the Prophet's (ﷺ) life, religious harmony, peace, love, brotherhood, and mutual respect should be promoted in society to foster unity and solidarity.
5. **Guidance for the Youth:** The younger generation should be introduced to the Prophet's (ﷺ) life and made to realize that following this sacred life is their religious and moral duty.
6. **Positive Use of Media and Technology:** In the modern era, media and social media should be utilized to spread the message of the Prophet's (ﷺ) life so that his call reaches all segments of society in line with contemporary needs.

Challenges and Current Issues:

1. **Religious Prejudice and Extremism:** In many parts of the world, hatred and violence are spread in the name of religion. Extremist groups attempt to sow discord among followers of different faiths.
2. **Lack of Knowledge and Understanding:** Many people lack accurate knowledge about the beliefs and teachings of other religions, leading to misunderstandings and strained relations.
3. **Negative Role of Politics:** At times, politicians exploit religious differences for their political gains, increasing social division and tension.
4. **Irresponsible Media Behavior:** Sometimes, the media exaggerates negative news and fuels religious sentiments, creating further discord.

5. **Intolerance and Lack of Dialogue:** The absence of proper and positive dialogue among followers of different religions is a major obstacle. Instead of understanding and listening to one another, people prefer blame and criticism.

Current Problems:

- **Lack of Reforms in Educational Curriculum:** The curriculum lacks positive and unbiased information about other religions, fostering prejudice among youth.
- **Limited Role of Religious Leaders:** Some religious leaders only promote their own sect or religion and do not prioritize interfaith harmony.
- **Hateful Content on Social Media:** The misuse of social media has also impacted interfaith relations. False news and provocative material increase mistrust.

Ways to Promote Interfaith Harmony

1. Bring together leaders of different religions to discuss common issues and ideas. This will enhance mutual understanding and respect.
2. Develop school and college curricula that teach the basic teachings of different religions and emphasize respect for them. Additionally, organize joint programs such as cultural events and sports competitions for students of different faiths to improve relationships.
3. Establish local committees that assist people regardless of religion, such as helping the poor, building hospitals, or engaging in other welfare activities where everyone can participate.
4. Run media programs that promote love, respect, and tolerance among different religions. Share stories where people of different faiths collaborate on common initiatives.
5. Governments should ensure equal rights for all religious groups and prevent religious discrimination. The rights of religious minorities must be protected, and their religious festivals should be respected.

6. Invite people of different faiths to each other's festivals so they can understand one another's culture. Organize joint cultural fairs where traditions, food, and customs of various religions are shared.
7. Create youth clubs where young people can engage in interfaith dialogue. Train young leaders to promote harmony within their own religious communities.
8. Form local committees to resolve religious conflicts through dialogue. Establish joint peace forums where religious leaders can work together to find solutions during disputes.
9. People of all religions should respect each other's places of worship and avoid any form of disrespect. Interfaith prayer gatherings should be encouraged so people can pray for one another.
10. Build good relationships with neighbors, regardless of their religion. This will foster love and brotherhood among communities.

Summary of the discussion:

This article clarifies the Islamic foundations of interfaith harmony, historical examples, and its importance in the present era. Islam is a universal religion that champions humanity, justice, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. The Qur'an and Sunnah repeatedly emphasize kind treatment of non-Muslims, respecting their beliefs, and safeguarding their rights. The noble character of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is exemplified through incidents such as the Treaty of Medina, the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, the agreement with the Christians of Nakhla, and allowing Christians to worship in the Prophet's mosque—these serve as clear examples of religious tolerance and the basis for interfaith relations. Throughout different periods of Islamic history—such as in Al-Andalus, the Ottoman Empire, and Mughal India—ideal harmony among diverse religions has been observed.

The article also highlights that in the contemporary world, challenges like religious

extremism, prejudice, a lack of knowledge, and negative media portrayals pose significant obstacles to interfaith harmony. To address these issues, it is essential to adopt the Prophet's (peace be upon him) teachings in individual and collective life, implement reforms in educational curricula, promote interfaith dialogue, and instill awareness of tolerance and acceptance among the youth. "Such practical steps are crucial to building a just, agreeable, and peaceful world rooted in respect and compassion.

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