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ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF COEXISTENCE IN SOCIAL LIFE AND *Mithāq-e-Medina*

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Abstract: The demographic composition of religious groups in general and Muslim population growth projections in contemporary world in particular, due to their present and future social, economic and political perspectives and anticipated outcomes, underline the need for a framework for harmony coexistence between Muslim and non-Muslim societies. This paper draws inspiration from *Mithāq-e-Medina* to construe such a framework for ongoing interfaith dialogue in different parts of the world. The *Treaty of Medina* provides an outline that covers different sensitive points of social, economic, political, and diplomatic differences among the followers of different religions “grouped as believers” to create a harmonious interfaith environment for peaceful coexistence and settlement of issues, conflicts and disputes. The Treaty can be used by re-contextualizing its spirit for aligning it with interfaith demands of today’s world. This paper ventures to move on that direction and suggests that the best possible way out is to focus on interfaith similarities to begin with and keep the differences out of any dialogue on the subject. The starting point is the word “believers” used in the Treaty of Medina. What are the common beliefs among the followers of different religions in a society? What are the teachings of the Quran? What steps were taken by the Holy Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) to promote a harmonious interfaith environment for peaceful coexistence as a religious leader and ruler?

Keyword: Islam, Social Life, Treaty of Medina, Religious harmony, Coexistence, Interfaith Dialogue.

Introduction

As a background of the present-day bloody condition of global world, Islamic concept of coexistence in the light of treaty of Medina (*Mithāq-e-Medina*) which is a religio-political experienced phenomena in Prophetic time. It has worth and potential to guide the humanity to promote humbleness and modesty in the multiple religious contemporary society. Keeping in view, the term peaceful co-existence is adopted to entail several things such as non-discrimination of the basis of caste, creed and color, lack of rigidity, discrimination and violence in religious matters, non-imposition of religious doctrines on other in socio-cultural, political and civilizational relations in multi-cultural and religious societies. It depends upon mutual understanding, coexisting and developing peaceful social norms which provide tolerance, sympathy and kindness to the whole society. All members draw their attention to protect environment from pollution of violence, aggressiveness and hostility that create horrible situation in the society. Ethics are human inheritances which can be explored to control harassment and aggravation in human societies for the development and stability. In this case, *Mithāq-e-Medina* may role model for multi-cultural state and societies even in contemporary time.

With exploring the topic, there are two major parts of this paper. Firstly, what is Islamic Concept of Coexistence in Social Life? How does Islam provide a framework for calm and nonviolent society to control human aggressive and destructive behavior with Law and order under Divine guidance? Secondly, it is examined that how did the *Treaty of Madina* seed the values of peaceful coexistence in multi-cultural and multi religious society of *Yathrab* (Medina) in the past?

The paper intends to reconnoiter the wave for multicultural society with modifying an example of *Mithāq-e-Medina* to stable contemporary social glob in the world. It adopts an analytical methodology for research during material analysis keeping touch descriptive method. Analysis comprises on formation of Muslim and non-Muslim communal setup in different area of the world. The study focuses on major three parts: Introduction, Islamic Perspective of coexistence and for getting recommendation, analysis of the communal interaction shaping under the *Mithāq-e-Medina*. This research is need of the time to keep sustain the society including multi-cultural dimension of the Islamic view point for global human legacy and it will open new avenue for further research putting every beneficiary side of the *Mithāq-e-Medina*.

1. Peaceful Coexistence

Peaceful Coexistence is a level of human habit in which multiple groups live together, interrelating peacefully with their conflicts and influential their disagreements in a peaceful ways.¹ It comes near to understand others view point by dialogue and sitting in common place for further practice in social life. It is “to exist together at the same time or in the same place and also to

live in peace with others despite differences, especially as a matter of policy".²Coexistence refers to "a way for groups of different faith, ideology, and background to live together peacefully with mutual understanding and tolerance of each other"³. In above mentioned definitions, it may draw few initial features are as follows:

With mutual understanding and acceptance "To exist together at the same time and in the same place and to exist in mutual tolerance"⁴ the definition expresses mutual meaning to stable human nature for capacity building and social peace.

With diversification of humanity, "To learn to recognize and live with differences"⁵ it shows the balance between two opinions and not to stand disagreement among human groups.

Human affiliation with each other provides human betterment "To develop a relationship between persons or groups in which none of them tries to destroy the other(s)"⁶

With strong interaction and communication, coexistence provides seeding to enhance the peace mentally as well as physically.

Resolutions among humanity keeps stability and passions in the society "To interact with a commitment to tolerance, mutual respect, and an agreement to settle conflicts without recourse to violence"⁷.

Disagreement and Variance is a human state in social phenomenon but coexistence comes with collaboration to stand possible level for the development of human society. According to all above mentioned definitions, the coexistence refers to differences and dissimilates including class, ethnicity, religion, race, gender, nationality etc. which expresses the diversity in the sense that individuals and groups differ from one another in various opinions and actions but that may acceptable. The tools of coexistence improve group differences, establish justice, resolve inconsistent issues, rise amalgamation, encourage inter-group relationships, generate a passive environment for individuals and mature community structures which all basis upon impartiality, justice and equity.

2. Islamic Concept of Coexistence

Prophet (Peace be upon Him) started preaching with the prophetic responsibility by God emphasizing in many verses.⁸With the Devine guideline and experience in Makkan life, Prophet (Peace be upon Him) had taken politically strong steps for peaceful coexistence in Medina. For the settlement of the Muslim community, he arranged a unique brotherhood of the history with the amalgam of *Ansār* and *Muhājir* □ *n* That was eternal stair for Muslim community to enjoy and cooperate among themselves through thick and thin. There is a brilliant vision for the *Treaty of Medina* which comprises upon three major units of Medina.

1. *Muhājir* □ *n*

2. *Ansār*
3. Jews and other non-believer tribes.

There are two parts of one agreement or more than one agreement in different times after migration to Medina. According to Hugh Kennedy, “a series of agreements were drawn up in the first two or three years after the Hijra, agreements which are known collectively as the Constitution of Medina. This takes the form of agreements between *Muhajir* and the people of *Yathrib* (Medina)”. After that, he writes for nonbeliever nation Jews, they were a strong community in Medina. “There are also clauses dealing with relations with the Jews, who are partners in the affairs of Medina and bear their share of the expenses of warfare as long as there is no treachery between them and the Muslims, although both Muslims and Jews will keep their own religion⁹.”

That is clear that internal Muslim community coexistence took place between *Muhājir* and *Ansaār* that is called “*MoaKhāt*” in the history.¹⁰ This peaceful initiative was just for the protection and development of *Muhājir*. The religion provides mutual love, devotion and cooperation to its followers for its enlargement and strong foundation in the society. Because of this Prophetic (Peace be upon Him) step, Muslim community constructed a security wall around itself and kept itself away from other communities especially for internal matter either social or economics.

With the system of Prophetic brotherhood, they did not feel and face anytime, an aggressive attitude by any member of the community. In fact the brotherhood was a sign of Allah Almighty and His granted system to the Muslim community by which they were rewarded love and care among themselves. Allah Almighty said:

مَا أَلْفَتْ يَنِّ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَلْفَ بَيْنَهُمْ

(You could never have inculcated this (love) in their hearts (with all these material resources). But Allah roused that love among them)¹¹ (through a spiritual relation).

Therefore, for political arrangement, they need to join other communities for the defense of Medina rather than religious improvement and introduction in whole world. This is next Prophetic (Peace be upon Him) step for external Peaceful coexistence as agreement with Jews as well as with other tribes, that is called “treaty of Medina” or “*Mīth q-Madīnah*”.

With this treaty, Prophet (Peace be upon Him) arranged to control eternal and external peace with the consent by local communities and they practically accepted Phrohatic personality as authority. In this regards, Prophet (Peace be upon Him) devolved legal framework to sustain peace in Medina for all residents which was accepted by all communities. Therefore, in multicultural society, there is one major barrier in the application of peaceful coexistence is the false notion of ethnic superiority. It is contemporary caused a great contract of bloodshed among different human races. But with the

revelation to the Prophet (Peace be upon Him), Holy *Qur'ān* devastated the ancient structure of racial superiority by declaring the equality of all human beings¹². It recognizes piety and righteousness as the original basis of dignity and superiority. This concept not only develops in man an positive attitude towards life by inspiring him to attain superiority through noble deeds, but also makes possible the realization of the universal brotherhood of Mankind. With keeping this view, *Qur'ān* highlighted these harmful notions in makkian time of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon Him) therefore, he demolished all racial superiorities of the dark time and stood by the system which protects the humanity and keeps it under the service of Allah Almighty.

3. *Qur'ānic* Concept of Peaceful Coexistence

As whole, Islam has worldly spiritual and ethical framework for peaceful coexistence with the lenience of non-Muslims, in its societies comprises tolerance, freedom of faith and sense of right and wrong. Islam expresses the concept of global association of mankind, purity and human justice in the treaties and agreements made with others as well as generally accepted principles of humanism since it exists in the world. But the *treaty of Medina* is first brilliant practical framework for peaceful coexistence in the dark time not only for Arabs but it also attracted universal humanism. The *treaty of Medina* was a divine guideline to build and sustain Islamic State and God at pre migration time, trained the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) with encounter of pagans and tribal people from surrounding Makkah. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) initially started his invitation to Islam with the divine order and totally depended upon it for further all works and actions. Prophet (Peace be upon him) adopted tolerance and determination to his mission during troubles and problems in Macon time. The *sūrah* refers to the incidents and treaties which keep Muslim community to stand among non-Muslim communities with Prophetic wisdom. The demographic picture of the foundation of Islamic state formatted different incidents and agreement for improving peaceful coexistence among multicultural society likewise *Treaty of Medina*.

Going to back in Macon time, Quranic guideline for the Prophet (Peace be upon Him), empowered to grow with human cultural but according to the will of God; the master and lord of all universe. God metaphorically advised to treat all the people with pace and calm which are human ethical tools for peaceful coexistence. The divine guidance is preferably enhanced for further discussion because it has granted the prophetic vision to provide the way to *Treaty of Medina*.

- a. ¹³ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِي دِينِي (So) you have your Din (Religion) and I have my Din (Religion) is a last verse of *Sūrah Kafroon* and as prefacing, Allah Almighty guided Prophet (Peace be upon Him) with the method of Dialogue in all verses of the *sūrah* but last verse states clearly

existence of other's religion as well as for "me". Other's religious existence with own religion in the society, learns to tolerate others and stand side by side in duff and dull time. This is just imagination for theoretical and conceptual co-existing of multi religion in one society. While the Prophet (Peace be upon Him) was also part of that society and he presented a real picture with the treating of pagan people. After migration, he applied all these principles upon the Mednian society as ruler.

b. ¹⁴ (قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ قُلِ اللَّهُ وَإِنَّا أَوْ إِيَّاكُمْ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًىٰ أَوْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ)

“Say: ‘Who provides you sustenance from the heavens and the earth?’ Say (yourself): ‘Allah (provides). And no doubt either we or you are guided aright or lost in open error.’”

Imam Tabar □ commented on this verse:

قال: والمعنى في (إِنَّا أَوْ إِيَّاكُمْ) إنا لضالون أو مهتدون. وإنكم أيضاً لضالون وهو يعلم أن رسوله

هو المهتديون غير الضال¹⁵

“Meaning of the Quranic words (إِنَّا أَوْ إِيَّاكُمْ) is “we are on wrong (go astray) or on right, and you are similarly on wrong. Allah Almighty clearly knows that His Prophet (Peace be upon Him) is upon my guidance and besides him is on wrong way”

This is a pattern of Allah Almighty by which learnt His Prophet (Peace be upon Him) to convey the message of Allah to the people who are upon definitely on wrong way but with rational and discussed. For the clearance of falsification, method was rationalized to near the understanding “others” among them.

God tells us that no one except Him has control over people's hearts and minds. Prophet Peace be upon Him is told that he cannot guide people in the sense of instilling truth in their hearts; only God can guide in this sense. The role of Prophet Peace be upon Him and other preachers is only to guide in the sense of showing the right path.

“Remind them, for you are only one who reminds, you are not at all a warder over them”¹⁶. God mentioned here to utilize your best ability for reminding the people and try to call them to right path because “O Muhammad! You are adviser to the people.”¹⁷

“And had Allah so willed, certainly all inhabitants on the earth would have believed. (When your Lord has not made them believe by force,) will you coerce the people until they become believers?”¹⁸

“The truth is that whoever you like (to bring on to the path of guidance) you do not yourself bring him on to the path of guidance. Instead, (it so happens that) whoever Allah pleases He makes him tread the path of guidance (through your mediation). And He knows best those who find the path of guidance”¹⁹

The initial legitimacy is to trust your motion when you want to success in your objective. When the preacher believes in the trusted guidance via dialogue and beyond the conscious mind the effort would be succeeded with innate divinity.²⁰

e. If Prophet does not have the power to instill good in people's hearts, the devil does not have the power to instill evil in them either. He can only tempt and deceive. But God ensures us that even this will not be effective unless people choose to listen to him; God comes to the help of those who seek his help and protection and guides to the truth everyone who genuinely seeks it.

“As to my servants, you (the Devil) have no power over them, except the deviant who choose to follow you²¹”.

God granted the guidance to the humanity for choosing right path and peace in worldly life because it is His virtues to select few people for the faith and that was happened in makkah time.

“And Satan says ... I had no power over you except that I called to you and you obeyed me. So blame me not, but blame yourselves²²”.

f. It is because faith is thus primarily a matter of the heart, it is necessarily a willful act; it is something that one has to choose to acknowledge, and to voluntarily act on. No one can be forced to be a Muslim in this basic sense

“Say: (It is) the truth from the Lord of you (all). Then whosoever will, let him believe, and whosoever will, let him disbelieve²³”

The Shariah clearly prohibited forcing non-Muslim to become Muslim. It is an historical fact that if the Muslims force in preaching, there should not be the Jews and Christians in the Muslims states.²⁴ But the picture displays reality in the global environment with the development of social harmony the Muslim territories.

g. The famous Qur'anic verse; “There is no compulsion in religion²⁵” is in consonance with these facts and doctrines. It is not, as some might mistakenly think, an isolated verse, nor is it the only verse that states this truth. There is no compulsion in religion because it is a futile attempt to try to force a person to accept a faith. It is not because it is in the interest of every individual to have the faith or belief of their choice, as some liberals might think. This cannot be so because some beliefs are based on falsehoods and cannot therefore be of any good to the individuals who adhere to them or to the society in which they spread.

4. Co-existence in the articles of Treaty of Medina.

The coexistence was built in to promote harmony among all communities of the Median. Jews especially, was the dominant nation in Median society were forced to follow the treaty and accept the authority of Allah Almighty

and Holy Prophet (Peace be upon Him). In article 28, it was declared: “When anyone among you differs about anything, the dispute shall be referred to Almighty Allah and to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon them) (as all final and absolute authority is vested in them²⁶)”. Authority was accepted by each group of the treaty. So Jews cogently, were under the command of Holy Prophet (Peace be upon Him). The Prophet of Allah Almighty did not judge any matter by His opinion but according to Divine guidance, he judged with their Divine book. Similarly, minority group participated in every matter which deals to political problem especially, when authority feels to defend the city and disobeying matter. Dr. Hamidullah describes this clause by his words:

“As regards defense, the most important provision in the constitution declared that war and peace were indivisible. All citizens shared responsibility for both. The concept of indivisibility of war and peace and their control by a central authority was significant development²⁷”.

Peaceful coexistence depends upon all parts of the society, by the any part which was authorized all commands to run the system and same part apply rules and clauses of the mutual agreement. All units agreed to accept the authority of Allah Almighty and His prophet (Peace be upon Him). Therefore, Prophet Muhammad Peace be upon Him tolerated “others” mean, nonbelievers and dealt all parts of the society with cooperation, humbleness and sincerity, the result of this leading role model has potential to become contemporary framework for escaping from blood shake of the humanity in the modern world.

In article 20, it was stated that:

“a Jew, who obeys us (the state) shall enjoys the same right of life protection (as the believers do), so long as they (the believers) are not wronged by him. (the Jews), and he does not help (others) against them²⁸”.

So that equality is essential point to stable with peace any society which depends upon pluralistic thoughts. Then society grows with effective and attractive position in the hearts and minds of members.

This is righteous and freewill to religious minority for ensuring peaceful coexistence in the society. With a view to create political stability, Islam attaches the greatest possible purity to pacts and agreements made with others.²⁹ The Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon Him) himself gave a concrete shape to the accommodating political spirit of Islam at establishment of His first Islamic state. In article 30, that consists totally upon religious freedom:

“The Jews of Banu Awf (non-Muslim minorities) shall be considered a community along with the believers. They shall be guaranteed the right of religious freedom along with the Muslims. The right shall be conferred on their associates as well as themselves

except those who are guilty of oppression or the violators of treaties. They will bring evil only on themselves and their family³⁰”.

There is equality for any matter between Muslim and non-Muslim, that seeds humbleness and tolerance in the hearts of members of both, Muslim and non-Muslim societies.

Now let us see, how Treaty of Medina can be a framework for contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim societies? For incisive of relevant answer, we should draw our concentration on the present situation of our societies that can take direction for peace building and nonviolence. Its outcomes can be pointed with the following shape:

I. Acceptance of other’s religion

”³¹” لليهود دينهم وللمسلمين دينهم (For Jews their religion and for Muslims their religion) is a real, powerful and implicated phenomenon for the peaceful coexistence in multi-cultural and multi religious society of Medina. No doubt, all clauses of the treaty of Medina had its importance and significance for the stability and development of first Islamic state but clauses concern to religion build acceptance of existence of other religion in a society that is key for living of multiple religions in one state or in the world. That is very necessary suggestion for existence of other’s religion and respecting others by the recognition and identity with their shape in which they are. Same idea was presented by the above mentioned verse of Sorah Kafroon: “you have your Din and I have my Din”.

Although, both have separate religion but each of them would not interfere in other’s religious matter or faith. Any contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim society must learn the lesson of acceptance of others with the heart and mind, that is an Islamic phenomena presented by the Quran and Sunnah with the especial dealing of Jews, they are bitterest of people in their enmity against the Muslims³² according to Quran.

II. Religious Freedom

With regard to establish peaceful religious coexistence in the society, freedom of faith provides social sincerity in the foundation of society. Every member feels that there is no compulsion in the religious matter. Utilizing force and compulsion not only cannot change the hearts of people, but it may in many instances increase hatred and animosity. He can go freely for ritual performance to his worship place. He doesn’t seed abhorrence, irritations and aggressiveness in his mind for other member who has opposite faith. In the treaty of Medina, minorities had right to say prayer according to their religion. Even they had right to construct their religious

buildings and to judge their mutual conflicts according to their divine book and law.

III. Interfaith Harmony

With the coexistence of Jews and Muslims in the boundaries of each religion, they could not interfere with other's religion. That is interfaith harmony for promoting peace, understanding other and social cooperation. No doubt there are different factors involved in forming people's opinions and faiths. The physical structure and the natural amalgam, time, place, education, and so many other factors have inevitable effects on people's faiths. Thus, the healthy way to change their opinion is to encounter them from their origins. Encounter of two major religions in the treaty of Medina provided an example to the modern societies for peaceful coexistence. By the meeting of different faith, natural principle of "give and take" effects on the social life of the followers. They interchange their cultural, moral and spiritual grounds by which unwillingly, they feel mutual tolerance and harmony among themselves. They feel unconsciously sympathetic views in their communication and practice.

IV. Protection of life

Every person has right to protect his life which is fundamental human right. That was declared by these words in the treaty: "Verily, whoever goes out (on a military expedition) shall be provided with security and whoever stays in Medina shall have (likewise), except those who commit oppression and violate the contents of this constitution³³". "A Jew, who obeys us (the state) shall enjoys the same right of life protection³⁴ (as the believers do)". Protection of life is a basic need for everyone and nobody can deny the treaty which secures the life with peace.

V. Social Equality

Society reflects by its members who they are. But when they present themselves with social harmony, sympathy and faithfully, so that is a clear picture of mutual respect with driven of religion. Same as in the treaty: "A Jew, who obeys us (the state) shall enjoys the same right of life protection(as the believers do), so long as they (the believers) are not wronged by him. (the Jews), and he does not help (others) against them". "All sub-branches of the Jews shall enjoy the same rights as granted to them³⁵ (the Jews)". Social equality reflects with the fulfillment of the treaty, any member disobeys the any clause of the agreement he finds punishment according to the same clause. This is also motivation for the present multi-cultural and religious societies.

VI. Human rights

Actually, whole constitution or clauses of the treaty of Medina show the human rights by which after coming societies or states has progressive way with peace and reconciliation. It was stated that the Jews of Aws (one of the basic constituent members of this document) and their allies shall possess the same constitutional status as the other parties to this document, with a condition that they should thoroughly sincere and honest in their dealing with the parties. This is worth of the modal and application of the treaty which provides same rights to those who are not direct members of any community but they are associates of the major unit of this agreement.³⁶ Value of human rights, to the minorities especially, leads to peace building and calm of any society.

VII. Righteousness and Justice

”وانه لا ينجز على ثار جرح”³⁷ No exception for justice prescribed by one article, that specifies to achieve harmony among people of different cultures and religions is that Islam has always advocated for the principle of justice and righteousness within humankind. Both parties are encouraged to deal kindly and justly with all people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. If justice is missed because of any side, the second one will take a command in its own hands which brings to bloodshed.

VIII. Mutual Consultation and honour

Respect and cooperation come to the society being a part of each community of them for their own goal and achievement. There is not only a theme but also a real and practicable principle for the peaceful coexistence. “There shall be mutual consultation and honourable dealing between the allies and there shall be the fulfillment not the violation, of all pledges³⁸”. This notion was useful for the past pluralistic society as well as for the contemporary society. Just for the matters which are common among the members of the society or state, especially for the defense of the city. As member of own community, Muslims should not share any opinion which relates to Allah Almighty and the Prophet (Peace be upon Him).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Every religion invites to good and positive sense for the betterment of human body and further for whole society. After exploring, achievement brings any positive mind to rationality which is an inseparable part of the Islamic religion, and its rationality does include that important ingredient of judging actions by their consequences. But it is of course a rationality which is guided by other Islamic values, for example protection of humanity, love and its welfare. The preferred action is always the action which results in the greatest good, or the least evil. The main goods to be achieved in Islam, for example

are ones which would be acceptable, in their general sense, to most people. These are Spiritual well-being, mental well-being, human life, human wealth and honor. Judged by this rational standard and those values, peaceful coexistence and cooperation is definitely to be preferred over wars and clashes in normal circumstances. The preferable and mental acceptable values offer any society either in past or in present, to irrigatesilenceand kindness in it. The *treaty of Medina*, according to Islamic rational methods, provides these values for peaceful coexistence between Muslim and non-Muslim societies in modern world. Undoubtedly, it can lead the glob to the peace, prosperity and reconciliation not only for the present but also for future.

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