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Social Cohesion in the Views of Islam and Buddhism: A Textual Analysis

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Abstract

Social Cohesion is a subject that is to be considered as a contemporary pluralistic society and in the context of globalization. So, the main objective of this article is to analyze the concept of social cohesion from the religious scop of Islam and Buddhism. This study contributes to objectively clarifying the similarities between the two paths and explaining their phenomenological parallels and structural affinities. Within this context, the paper focuses on exploring the views of Islam and Buddhism towards social cohesion to use as textual evidence for resolving religious conflicts and ethnic unrest in places where Muslims and Buddhists live together. To achieve this end, the research comparatively examines the dynamics of social cohesion as described in Islam and Buddhism with the concern of the inner dimension and outer dimension of the subject matter. This research applies qualitative methodology, in which the researchers use data that includes textual analysis on written materials such as books, articles, and internet sources. The findings reveal that both religions share a similar scope of social cohesion which contains theoretically accepting diversity, and loving compassion with others practically. Both religions prioritize human dignity as the main standard in social cohesion. This study guides to eliminate misunderstandings about religions: Islam, and Buddhism and to succeed in a process of reconciliation and for peaceful engagement among the diverse religious groups.

Keywords: Islam, Buddhism, Social Cohesion, Inner dimension, Outer dimension.

Introduction

Social cohesion among various groups of people belonging to different faiths, religions, ethnicities, cultures, races, colors, languages, nationalities, etc. has been considered a pre-condition of global peace and social security. It has also been defined as an important element for safeguarding human rights and freedom. Mankind has been struggling to find peace since the beginning of history and has established various principles and agreements

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to protect and ensure social cohesion. In the past Magna Carta (1215),[1] the Covenant of the League of Nations (1919),[2] the General Treaty for the Renunciation of War (1928)[3], and the Charter of United Nations (1945)[4] are the famous international covenants and remarkable initiations for safeguard social cohesion.

Although certain conducts and different beliefs are found in a territory, it is emphasized that social cohesion is a very important theme. Despite the concept of social cohesion is viewed from various angles, social Cohesion with the different principles among the religions is essential to be contemplated in today's complex world. "O mankind, We created you all from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another...", "Hatred is never appeased by hatred. Hatred is only appeased by Love (or non-enmity). This is an eternal law." These two religious verses discuss that there should not be any discrimination based on race, religion or any other form. Like all the major religions in the world, at its core, the core message of Islam is peace. The word Islam itself refers to peace and Islamic teachings contain basic values for reconciling disagreements among diverse groups of people belonging to different religions, tribes, ethnicities, races, languages, colors, nationalities, etc.

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[1] Magna Carta is one of the most famous documents in the world history, issued by King John of England (r.1199 1216). For the first time, it established the principle that everybody, including the king, was subject to the law. Although nearly a third of the text was deleted or rewritten, and almost all the clauses have been repealed in modern times, Magna Carta remains a cornerstone of the British constitution. For details, see the British library Magna Carta an introduction, (2014, January 17), Retrieved October 03, 2020, from https://www.bl.uk/magna-carta/articles/magna-carta-an-introduction

[2] The Covenant of the League of Nations was formed at the end of 1st World War to establish global peace and security. The charter was approved on 11th April 1919. For details, see The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, (2020, March 03), League of Nations. Retrieved October 03, 2020, from https://www.britannica.com/topic/League-of-Nations

[3] General Treaty for Renunciation of War is a 1928 international agreement in which signatory states promised not to use war to resolve, disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them. It also known as 'Kellogg–Briand Pact'. See for more details: The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, (2017, June 20), Kellogg. Retrieved October 03, 2020, from https://www.britannica.com/event/Kellogg

[4] The Charter of the United Nations was signed on 26th June 1945 and came into force on 24 October 1945. The Charter outlined a broad set of principles relating to achieving higher standards of living, addressing economic, social, health, and related problems, and universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion. For details, Charter of the United Nations. (n.d.). Retrieved October 11, 2020, from https://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/index.html

intending to establish social cohesion. Similarly, The Buddhist teachings are most clearly associated with non-violence and the principle of Maitrī (Sanskrit; Pali: Mettā) means loving-kindness, friendliness, and an active healthy interest in others. Unfortunately, establishing social cohesion has now become a challenge in the countries where Muslims and Buddhists live as equal citizens. Therefore, these two religions are the most misunderstood in the contemporary world in terms of social cohesion.

Recently, in different parts of the world, intolerant attitudes among different religious groups have greatly increased especially between Muslims and Buddhists in some countries like Burma, Sri Lanka and Thailand. In the last decades, Muslim-Buddhist clashes have been gaining global attention, referring to the events such as the destruction of the Nalanda monastery in the thirteenth century and the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues by the Afghan Taliban in 2001,[1] the Buddhist government's dominance of Muslim minorities in South Thailand, violence against the Muslim Rohingya and the rise of the 969 movement in Myanmar, the ethnic riots in Sri Lanka have seriously harmed the Muslim-Buddhist interrelationship and social cohesion. As a result, social cohesion has become a challenge for global peace and security, especially in the areas where Muslims and Buddhists have been living as equal citizens. These countries are suffering from internal resistance and intolerant situations. Consequently, Muslims and Buddhists are occasionally characterized as terrorists or extremists. Within this global context, it is worthy to explore the textual views on Islam and Buddhism towards social cohesion to resolve tense situations among diverse religious groups.

Literature Review

Amid the recent works, there are few Muslim studies about Buddhism, three of which are debatable, such as those by Imran Nasir Hosein,[2] Abdullah Numsuk,[3] and Harun Yahya[4] the objective of these works does not bring any interreligious understandings and cooperation between these two religions. Similarly, the works do not encompass any detailed explanation about textual clarifications which promote social cohesion between Muslims and Buddhists.

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[1] Johan Elverskog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road*, *University of Pennsylvania Press* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2010), pp. 1–4.

[2] Imran Nazar Hosein, *Islam and Buddhism in the Modern World* (Masjidh Dar al-Qurān, 2001).

[3] Abdullah Numsuk, *Buddhism: History, Doctrines, and Its Relationship with Sūfīsm* (Maktaba Adwa us-Salaf, 1999)

[4] Harun Yahya, *Islam and Buddhism* (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 2003).

However, the two Buddhist-Muslim dialogue sessions that make good interreligious understanding among these two religions. First, conducted by Dr. Daisaku Ikeda and Dr. Majid Tehranian,[1] which is a prime example of inter-religious dialogue. Secondly, the dialogue of Abdul Rahman Wahid or Gus Dur (1940–2009) with Daisaku Ikeda[2] which cover meetings between Buddhist and Islamic civilizations from the 7th century to the present, and their shared similarities. Yet, these dialogues only cover more general views or common values of all religions, yet it does not focus on any specific textual clarifications which promote social cohesion among the adherents. In contrast, the works of Snjezana Veljacic Akpınar on Buddhist Meditations on Islamic Contemplative Paths[3]: Less Traveled Roads and Abandoned Junctions, Alexander Berzin's study on Buddhist-Muslim Doctrinal Relations[4] and the work about Dialogue Between Islam and Buddhism through the Concepts Ummatan Wasaṭan (The Middle Nation) and Majjhima-Patipada (The Middle Way) by Imtiyaz Yousuf[5] include some conceptual ideas which promote good interreligious understanding between Muslim and Buddhists. However, there are no any works have been published which highlight social cohesion through Buddhist and Islamic religious views.

The Methodology of the Study
This article falls within the domain of the history of religious thought which is a textual study in nature, and it involves library research. Thus, this article applies to the qualitative approach. It uses a literal review on analysis of the literature studied about both Islam and Buddhism concerning social cohesion and its textual evidence. The results are gathered and arranged for the construction of social cohesion according to Islam and Buddhism.

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[1] Daisaku Ikeda and Majid Tehranian, *Global Civilization. A Buddhist-Islamic Dialogue* (London: British Academic Press, 2003).

[2] Abdurrahman Wahid, and Daisaku Ikelda, *The Wisdom of Tolerance: A Philosophy of Generosity and Peace*, (I.B. Tauris, 2015).

[3] Snjezana Veljacic Akpinar, *Buddhist Meditations on Islamic Contemplative Paths: Less Traveled Roads and Abandoned Junctions* (Buddhist Text Translation Society 2015).

[4] Alexander Berzin, "Buddhist-Muslim Doctrinal Relations," *Buddhist Attitudes toward Other Religions*, 2008.

[5] Imtiyaz Yusuf, "Dialogue Between Islam and Buddhism through the Concepts Ummatan Wasaṭan (The Middle Nation) and Majjhima-Patipada (The Middle Way)." *journal of Islamic Studies* 2009. 48 (3): pp. 367–94.

Concerning the source of this article, both primary and secondary sources in English, Arabic, Sinhala, Pali, and Tamil languages are consulted. The study concludes that both religions share a similar scope for social cohesion and declare humanity as a right to be granted to everyone. Both religions prioritize social interest based on human values as the main frame of reference when discussing social cohesion.

Definitions of Social Cohesion

Social cohesion has become a topic that is widely discussed in the contemporary world; hence social cohesion implies the capacity to live together in harmony. Social cohesion as a sociological concept is notions that gain momentum towards the end of the 20th (twentieth) century. The term is defined by language experts in various aspects, yet it has two words; Social and cohesion. Social refers to living or being disposed to live in companionship with others or in a community, rather than in isolation.[1] The word cohesion means the act or state of cohering, uniting, or sticking together.[2] Therefore, Social cohesion describes the extent of solidarity among groups in society. It stems from a democratic attempt to establish social balance. It is known that this is a social process that aims to strengthen the plurality of citizenship by reducing inequality and socioeconomic disparities and fractures in society. It reflects people's demands for both personal development and a sense of belonging and links together individual freedom and social justice, economic efficiency and the fair sharing of resources, and pluralism and common rules for resolving all conflicts.[3] Thus, the idea of social cohesion is used to maximize the symbolic richness of multiculturalism and tends to be absorbed by others of the proximate group, such as equity, social inclusion, and well-being. Therefore, the concept of social cohesion attempts to give solutions on how the society is held together despite a great differentiation and complexity occasioned by religious, race, ethnic, etc divisions.[4]

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[1] "Definition of Social," www.dictionary.com, accessed August 5, 2021, https://www.dictionary.com/browse/social.

[2] "Definition of Cohesion," www.dictionary.com, accessed August 5, 2021, https://www.dictionary.com/browse/cohesion.

[3] Anna Rita Manca, "Social Cohesion," in *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research*, ed. Alex C. Michalos (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2014), 6026–28, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_2739.

[4] Itumeleng Mekoa and Dauda Busari, "Social Cohesion: Its Meaning and Complexities," *Journal of Social Sciences* 14, no. 1 (2018): pp. 107–15,

Social cohesion invokes many societal characteristics which are taken to be constitutive of a unified society. These generally include characteristics that relate to social attitudes and behaviors. Following are social attitudes and behaviors commonly referred to when describing social cohesion.

1. Shared values and goals (such as liberty, democracy, meritocracy, equality, etc.)
2. A sense of belonging and common identity (inclusion and other forms of identity)
3. Tolerance and respect for other individuals and cultures
4. Interpersonal and institutional trust
5. Civic cooperation
6. Active civic participation
7. Law-abiding behavior (low crime rates).[1]

Considering the above clarifications, social cohesion between diverse people is both a personal and social requirement. Therefore, it is believed that a study on social cohesion from a religious perspective is seen as an important theme because it could serve as a mechanism for enhancing cross-cultural religious communication. Similarly, discoveries and insights emerging from the academic study of religions on themes like social cohesion could be essential to resolve contemporary human challenges. Isolation is not conducive to growth and advancement to counter nonviolent. So, the relevance of research in the field of social cohesion between Buddhist and Islamic scripture were highlighted in this context.

Elements of Social Cohesion
It is generally observed that to preserve its nature, the notion of "Social cohesion" has some fundamental elements. According to our reading, the following two elements contain some significant features in order to establish social cohesion among diverse religious adherents. The first element is accepting the diversity theoretically, and secondly practicing love and compassion. Theoretically, it is important to accept the diversity among the people before practically adopt to make love and compassion with others. Similarly, these two elements can be considered

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https://doi.org/10.3844/jssp.2018.107.115.

[1] Andy Green and Jan Germen Janmaat, "Defining Social Cohesion," in *Regimes of Social Cohesion: Societies and the Crisis of Globalization*, ed. Andy Green and Jan Germen Janmaat, Education, Economy and Society (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011), 6, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230308633_2.

as an inner dimension of a person's mindset on surroundings and the outer dimension with surroundings. So, it is appropriate to observe these two elements in the light of Islamic and Buddhist traditions.

I. Inner Dimension - Theory; Accepting Diversity.

II. Outer Dimension - Practice; Love and compassion with Others.

Firstly, the most important element to ensure social cohesion is, accepting diversity and a thorough understanding of diversity, also which can be considered as an inner dimension and can streamline a person's mindset and view of surroundings. Through good knowledge and understanding of diversity even among the people, the inner dimension can be malted in a grown manner. It is understood that without fulfillment of the inner dimension which contains a wider view on accepting diversity among the people, social cohesion will not be achieved positively, and it remains ironically or symbolically. However, to achieve social cohesion practically, the involvement in the second element is more important. This second element is considered as behaving others with love and compassion, and it can be classified as an outer dimension that contains the practical method to ensure social cohesion among diverse people. Therefore, it is hoped that the inner and outer dimensions of the elements of social cohesion will ensure harmonious life among religious adherents in general, among Muslims and Buddhists in particular.

The Religious Origins of Social Cohesion According To Islam

The very word Islam etymologically refers to peace and submission. The word Islam derives from the Arabic root *Salām*, or *Silm*, which means peace and obedience to God's will.[1] Each Muslim is ordered to greet other Muslims with the words "*Assalām-o-Alaikum*" which means peace to be upon you. God refers to Himself *as-Salām* or "Peace" in several verses of the Holy Qur'ān. Hence, the spirit of peace and social cohesion is rooted in every principle and norm of Islam. In its true sense, every instruction of Islam aims to secure peace and create social cohesion in every sphere of life and society. It is believed that several verses of the Holy Qur'ān and Prophetic (May peace be upon him).) Sayings promote social cohesion among diverse groups of people.

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[1] Esposito, John L, "Islam." In the Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World, edited by J. L. Esposito. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009)

Inner Dimension – Accepting Diversity

The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. From a sociological perspective, it means understanding that each person or group is unique and recognizing their differences despite race, color, religion. Similarly, it is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within everyone.[1] Therefore, this inner dimension that describes accepting diversity has become an urgent task to promote or maintain social cohesion among religious adherents and this is considered as the beginning level of the social cohesion process.

According to Islamic teaching, universal diversity has an indispensable nature and essential phenomenon in the world. Islam teaches that diversity is part and partial of the law of nature and the diversity in the human family as the inherent divine order in creation (*Sunnat allāh*) to promote mutual understanding (*taʿāruf*) and partnership between distinctive human individuals and groups. There are different kinds of diversity concepts and theories in Islam, but diversity within the religious adherents plays the most important role to safeguard social cohesion. Therefore, it can be specified that Islam excepts social cohesion with the description of accepting diversity.

The accepting diversity among religious adherents is not new; it has been discussed in one form or another by past philosophers and theologians of various schools in Islamic tradition. Religious diversity can be defined as "respecting the otherness of others." While some claim that religious pluralism is controversial in Islam, because of its philosophical controversy, yet Islamic civilizations have been characterized as one of the most religious pluralist civilizations, which respects the otherness of others. The primary sources of Islam, namely *Qurʾān* and *Ḥadīths*, promote the fundamental right to protect an individual's belief, even though it may contradict with Islamic belief. Several Al-*Qurʾānic* verses demonstrate this, among them *Al-Qurʾān* chapter 5:48, chapter 11:118, chapter 22:67, chapter 30:22, and chapter 49:13, contain the most significant features of accepting diversity among different religious people. It is mentioned clearly in the Holly *Al-Qurʾān* "to you shall be your religion and to me shall be my religion."[2] Therefore respecting the otherness of others is vastly discussed within the scope of Islamic tradition. So, realizing this inner dimension make our thinking pattern wider to safeguard social cohesion.

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[1] "Definition for Diversity," Queensborough Community College, accessed August 6, 2021, https://www.qcc.cuny.edu/.
[2] al-Qurʾān 109:6

In prophetic history, the Islamic message on accepting diversity was also expressed in the Medina Charter[1] too, which was articulated by the Prophet Muhammad (May peace be upon him). This put together diverse religious and ethnic groups, giving equal rights and protections to each of them to ensure social cohesion. Another testament of accepting diversity was the agreement that the Prophet formed with the Christian monks of Najran, securing their monastery and granting them freedom of religion.[2] Therefore, it is accepted that Islam guides clearly to accept diversity and act accordingly, hence it ensures social cohesion among diverse people. So, it is necessary to generate the thinking pattern according to diversity which can be said inner dimension of the process of social cohesion.

Outer Dimension - Love and Compassion

Another most important element of social cohesion is the outer dimension of accepting diversity, which is considered as the practical implementation. Love and compassion and sharing mercy with others are considered as the practical level of social cohesion. This outer dimension relates to a person's behavior with others. However, to ensure the outer dimension it is necessary to cultivate the inner dimension of the process of social cohesion which explains the importance of understanding diversity and it has been discussed before. Therefore, it can be summarized that the inner dimension incorporates a theoretical frame for establishing correct awareness about social cohesion while the outer dimension consists of a practical framework that contains a person's behavior with others.

Indeed, Islam employs a wide definition of love and compassion, and Muslims believe that love to God and other people (God's creation, in Islamic perspective) are the most important basis in Islamic life. Similarly, in the Islamic tradition, foremost among God's attributes are mercy and compassion or, in the canonical language of Arabic, *Rahmān*, and *Rahim* hence God is considered as most merciful and compassionate. Similarly, in the first page, the first chapter and, indeed, the first verse of the Qur'an, God presents himself in which he states, "In the name of Allah, the Most

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[1] Medina Charter was drawn up on behalf of the Islamic prophet Muhammad (SAW) shortly after his arrival at Medina (then known as Yathrib) in 622 CE. For more details see: Lecker, Michael (26 August 2014). "The Constitution of Medina". Oxford Bibliographies.

[2] Craig Considine, "Religious Pluralism and Civic Rights in a 'Muslim Nation': An Analysis of Prophet Muhammad's Covenants with Christians," *Religions* 7, no. 2 (2016), https://doi.org/10.3390/rel7020015.

Compassionate and the Most Merciful,"[1] the chapter and the verse that Muslims read at least 17 times every day while performing the five mandatory prayers. Similarly, each of the 114 chapters of the Qur'ān, with one exception (chapter 9), begins with this verse, "In the name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful, since compassion and mercy and love are the words that occur most often in the Qur'ān and Prophetic sayings. It can be summarized that the Quranic message to promote social cohesion practically is "And do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good."[2] This seemingly simple verse offers a deep reflection on how to be a practicing Muslim and behaving others with love and compassion to attain god's love. So, the fundamental teachings of Islam guide to behave kindly with others even in hard situations.

In the life of the last prophet of Islam Muhammad (May peace be upon him). Indicates many practical situations and incidents that how he treated the people with love and compassion either it's a Muslim or non-Muslim or even with an enemy. Prophet Muhammad (May peace be upon him) says "None of you has faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."[3] The Syrian scholar Sheikh Mustafa Bugha[4] commented on the above prophetic narration in his book *Al-wāfi Fi Sharahil Arba'een An-Nawawiyyah*: "it is mentioned that 'brother' here is not limited to just fellow believers (or Muslims), but it can be extended to all of humanity as well - *Ukhuwwah Insaniyah* (brotherhood in humanity). Hence, we must ensure that what we like for ourselves, we also do it for others without any discrimination. Similarly, what we do not like for ourselves, we do not do it to others. The Prophet Muhammad (May peace be upon him) emphasized that we should be good neighbors. He told us that, as believers, we should not usurp the rights of our neighbors and do not things that may disturb and harm them.[5] According to the Prophetic narrations Love and Mercy will bring great rewards in the day of Judgment, Muhammad (S.A.W) said "Love the poor and bring them near you, for he will bring you near him on the day of Resurrection."[6] Therefore, these narrations and prophetic

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[1] al-Qur'ān1:1
[2] al-Qur'ān 2:195
[3] Sahih al-Buhari, Vol. 1, Book 2, Hadith 13, Sunnah.com, accessed August 5, 2021, https://sunnah.com/bukhari:13.
[4] He is Mustafa Dib al-Bugha al-Maidani Ad-Dimashqi ash-Shafi`ii, He specialized in Comparative Fiqh
[5] Bugha Mustafa, *Al-Wāfi Fi Sharhil Arba'een An-Nawawiyyah*, Ḥadīth no 13.
[6] al-Tirmidhi, Ḥadīth 1376.

behaviors with others clarify the practical importance of love and compassion for social cohesion.

Asma' bint Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (May Allah be pleased with her) said: "My mother came to me while she was still a polytheist, so I asked the Messenger Prophet Muhammad, 'My mother, has come to visit me and she is hoping for (my favor). Shall I maintain good relations with her?' He (peace and blessings be upon him) replied, '**Yes, maintain good relations with your mother.**'"[1] Similarly, it was narrated that `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "The Messenger of Allah bought some food on credit from a Jew, and he gave him a shield of his as collateral (*rahn*)."[2] Jabir ibn Hayyan said: "The Prophet and his Companions stood up for the funeral of Jew that passed by him until it disappeared." (In another narration) Jabir said: "The Prophet and his Companions stood up for the funeral of a Jew until it disappeared."[3] These narrations and prophetic practices highlight Muhammad's (May peace be upon him) behavior on love and compassion with others. Therefore, every Muslim must deal with others with love and compassion, and this is considered a prophetic live style and religious obligation in Islam.

Beyond doing well to one another, Prophet Muhammad (May peace be upon him.) also showed how people should treat other living creatures with love and mercy. He warned against harming the animals and insects. In a narration, Prophet Muhammad (May peace be upon him.) says, "A woman entered Hell because of a cat which she tied up and did not feed, or let it loose to eat of the vermin of the earth until it died."[4] Similarly, when the prophet once more explained the value of treating a dog "A man felt very thirsty while he was on the way, he came across a well. He went down the well, quenched his thirst, and came out. Meanwhile, he saw a dog panting and licking mud because of excessive thirst. He said to himself, "This dog is suffering from thirst as I did." So, he went down the well again and filled his shoe with water and watered it. Allah thanked him for that deed and forgave him. The people said, "Oh Messenger of Allah (Rasulullah)! Is there a reward for us in serving the animals?" He replied: "Yes, there is a reward for serving any animate (living being)."[5] These two historical incidents explain the value of a living being whether it is human or not. Therefore, compared to other living creations, human creation has a great

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[1] Sahih al- Bukhari Vol. 3, Book 47, Ḥadīth 789.
[2] Sunan An-Nasa'i, Vol. 5, Book 44, Hadith 4654.
[3] Sunan An-Nasa'i, Vol. 3, Book 21, Ḥadīth 1929.
[4] Sunan Ibn Majah, Vol. 5, Book 37, Ḥadīth 4256.
[5] Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 8, Book 73, Ḥadīth 38.

position with Allah. So, dealing with human creation by showing love and compassion brings the Creator's satisfaction and great rewards. This is considered as the outer dimension of the process of social cohesion which is mentioned clearly in Islamic tradition.

The Religious Origins of Social Cohesion According To Buddhism

The Buddha appeared in ancient India, at a time of political, social, and spiritual tension. Theravada canonical texts provide testimony to the prevalence of wars between kings and the republican states. The scripture also shows that the Buddha worries with social conflicts caused by crime, poverty, and endless disputes and confrontations between the many competing religious and philosophical schools of the time.[1] So, it can be said that the message of Buddha covers the attainment of peace and nonviolence, a peaceful world with a peaceful mind.

Buddhism explains social cohesion at the highest level so, it encourages equality among all human beings including yourself, parents, friends, monks, the old, animals, and even with enemies. So, in those terms, Buddhist guidance to show equal respect to all the living beings in the world contains significant features. According to Buddhism, equality, and justice is not fragmentary and sectional, but complete and universal which safeguard social cohesion. Not only between man and man, Buddha and Buddha, is their equality, but also between man and Buddha, man and animals; all of them are equal with each other. Therefore, it is believed that the teachings of Buddha guide clearly to live together with peace without any discrimination among religious adherents to ensure social cohesion.

Inner Dimension - Accepting Diversity
The most important aspect of social cohesion is accepting diversity and as described early, this is the inner dimension of ensuring social cohesion. Through the inner dimension, a person can easily digest what is the true notion of the universe and environment and its reality and diversity even among religious adherents. Therefore, if one wishes to live a happy and peaceful life, the most important duty should be to acknowledge the diversity of the world and the diverse people in which he lives.

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[1] Mhinda Palihawadana, "The Therevada Analysuis of Conflicts." *In Buddhism, Conflict and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka*, 83–93. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203007365-13.

The acceptance of diversity according to Buddhism is primarily based on the Brahmānic tradition. The Brahmānic tradition as existed in the 6th century BCE was entirely opposed to the doctrine introduced by Buddhism. It does not mean that the Buddha hated Brahmānas. He used to visit Brahmānas and had friendly discussions and it is mentioned in Buddhist history in various discussions like dialogues with Tevijja, Canki, and Sonadada.[1] According to the Brahmajāla Sutta, there were many teachings and schools of thought in Bharat (ancient India)[2] during the period of the Buddha. However, the Buddha did not come to condemn the pagan monks and their teachings, and he also appreciated the virtues of religious teachers. He went to various religious teachers and met different people and leaders. When Buddha came to some monasteries, those religious teachers silenced their students, and politely welcomed Buddha. The reason he got such value is that he had broader knowledge that accepts diversity within different adherents without any discrimination to safeguard social cohesion.

The Buddha often summarized his teachings into four noble truths: life is *Dukkha* (unsatisfactory); the cause of *Dukkha*; the end of *Dukkha*; and the way to end *Dukkha*.[3] According to this Buddhist approach, the way to control religious unrest and conflict naturally follows from correctly understanding the causes of conflict. So, it is accepted that social cohesion is secured when the correct understanding of causes took place. Therefore, the correct understanding of diversity makes a huge impact on ensuring social cohesion among diverse people.

To understand and accept diversity among religious adherents, Buddhism teaches that all human beings are from a common origin. It is mentioned clearly in Aggañña Sutta which is the collection's 27th Sutta from the Digha Nikaya in Pali canon (Tripitaka), it says that all humans contain the same origin. The Buddha delivered the Aggañña sutta to two Brahmins (Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja) who left their family and caste to become monk, to explain the "human origins." That not only Vedic Brahmins but all living beings came to this world at the beginning of the Earth from the Brahma realms. In other words, at the beginning of the

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[1] Vijitha Kumara, "An Inquiry into Likelihood of Religious," in *South Asia Culture, History and Heritage*, ed. Anura Manatunga (Kelaniya: South Asian Culture, History and Heritage Center for Asian Studies University of Kelaniya, 2015), p. 108.

[2] See; Digha Nikaya, Brahmajāla Sutta

[3] Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2013) (Chapter4: The Four Noble Truths) pp. 48–62

present Earth, every living being on this Earth right now was a Brahma.[1] So it is accepted that Buddhist doctrine accepts diversity among people by accepting the common origin of the human being.

Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favorably than another person in a similar situation and this treatment cannot be objectively and reasonably justified. Buddhist sources completely deny human differences and inequalities based on birth and wealth or any other reason. It is mentioned that the Buddha stands against human discrimination. Brahmins were given great status in ancient India, so people wanted to be born or become and live as Brahmāns, but according to Buddhism, no one is a Brahmin by birth or generation. Not by matted hair, nor by family, nor by birth does one become a Brahmin. But in whom there exist both truth and righteousness, pure is he, a Brahmin is he. Lord Buddha says "I do not call him a Brahmin merely because he is born of a Brahmin womb or sprung from a Brahmin mother. Being with impediments, he should address others as "sir." But he who is free from impediments, free from clinging--him I call a Brahmān.[2] Accepting diversity and working for it, is the fundamental teaching of Buddhism which everyone should accept and follow. Therefore, no doubt through Buddhist teaching, the inner dimension of the process of social cohesion contains accepting diversity among religious people.

Outer dimension - Love and Compassion
The outer dimension of the process of social cohesion encompasses love and compassion that can be considered as a practical method of attaining social cohesion which Buddhism always values based on kindness. It is mentioned that war wins one, but that victory is another reason for hatred hence the loser always feels sad, so this is the nature of war. Similarly, the Buddhist history mentions that Lord Buddha visited Sri Lanka three times[3] and twice this was to remove the hatred and establish peace and harmony based on love and kindness.[4] Therefore Buddha often concerns with issues that destroy social cohesion and promote violence and hurt among human beings. So, it can be summarized that love and compassion have substantial characteristics in Buddha's teachings.

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[1] Digha Nikaya, Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta p. 26.

[2] Dhammapada pp. 393- 396.

[3] See: *Durutu Poya*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 12, 2020, from http://dhammacakka.weebly.com/35033540351535403501354035083548352435483514.html

[4] Buddhist Pansiya Panas Jathaka Katha, pp. 269, 352, 388 and 467 stories.

According to Hajime Nakamura,[1] the fundamental principle of Buddhist ethics is that all men should develop an attitude and behavior of compassion. True wisdom consists not in metaphysical sophistication, but in practical knowledge which is expressed in the attitude of compassion as the fundamental principle in social life. The compassion or love of one's neighbors is very highly esteemed in Buddhism. Compassion is *Metta* in Pali and *Maitri* in Sanskrit, both derived from *Mitra*, or friend, thus, both words mean "true friendliness" and often reflect in Buddhism. So, according to Buddhism, if someone allows the virtue of compassion or love to grow and it will not occur to harm anyone else.[2] Matt Caron clarifies, that there are six specific aspects and rules of Buddha regarding love and mercy which are described as Buddha's Rules of Love,[3] the analysis of these rules gives to realize the vastness of love and mercy according to Buddhist doctrine.

The main Buddhist Sutras[4] are specified in the normative teachings of Gautama Buddha, it is noticed some conceptual ideas can trace from Buddhis Sutras which promote peace and harmony, and love and mercy. It is mentioned that there are four elements of love that make it 'true' love and these concepts must combine to make love, true and long-lasting. They are not mystical or even spiritual concepts; they are merely acts and values that must be retained by the person to make love powerful. These four elements of love are easy to grasp, but they make a relationship much more worthy and healthy.[5] These conceptual ideas have been taught by the Buddha and that call *Brahmavihārās* (sublime attitudes, lit. "abodes of Brahma")[6] or a series of four Buddhist virtues and the meditation practices which are mentioned in Digha Nikaya -13 of Pali Tri Pitaka.[7] Indeed, It is believed that these four sublime states of mind protect social cohesion among diverse people.

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[1] He was a Japanese Orientalist, Indologist, philosopher and academic of Vedic, Hindu and Buddhist scriptures.

[2] K. W Morgan, *The path of the Buddha* (Ronald Press Co 1956) p. 386.

[3] See: Matt Caron, Buddha's 6 Rules of Love, https://blog.sivanaspirit.com/buddha-6-rules-of-love/

[4] In Buddhism, sutras, also known as suttas, are canonical scriptures, many of which are regarded as records of the oral teachings of Gautama Buddha.

[5] Francesca. F, *The Four Elements of True Love According to Buddha*, September 22nd, 2017, http://upliftconnect.com/the-four-elements-true-love/

[6] See; Nyanaponika Thera, *The Four Sublime States*, (Kandy: Buddha Dharma Education Association 1999), www.buddhanet.net.

[7] Digha Nikaya -13, Metta Sutta.

Brahmavihārās - **Four sublime attitudes:**

1. Loving-kindness (Pāli: *mettā*, Sanskrit: *maitrī*)

The word *mettā*, Sanskrit: *maitrī* is translated into kindness or mercy and this is not only the desire to make someone happy but the ability to do so. Someone may have every intention to love, but the way that someone love may make them unhappy, so it is accepted to consider true expectation by behaving positively. Dhammapada explains that "Overcome the angry one by not getting angry; overcome the wicked by goodness; overcome the stingy by generosity, and the liar by speaking the truth."[1]

2. Compassion (Pāli and Sanskrit: *karuṇā*) results from metta, it is identifying the suffering of others as one's own

Karuna, or compassion, is the second *Brahmavihāra*. Compassion is what occurs when someone with goodwill experiences suffering, as Ajahn Thanissaro says in his essay "Head & Heart Together: Taking Wisdom to the *Brahmavihāras*."[2]

According to the Buddhist text, it can simplify that this is the ability to ease the pain of others, as well as the desire to other's well-being. This is also based on understanding, but the understanding of the suffering of love. Only when someone truly understands others' suffering will be able to help in easing their burdens. It can be said that, to develop this conceptual idea: Communication with loved people and knowing what troubles them and getting if there is anything that can do that will help instantly. Through this communication will ensure understanding and bring the desire to help others for strengthening the relationship to maintain social cohesion among people.

3. Empathetic joy (*Pāli* and Sanskrit: *muditā*):

Not only to compassion but also to joy with others. Typically, enough, there is no proper English word for this quality to rejoice because of someone's fortune. However, it can be easily understood through the opposite words: jealousy, envy. This concept is highly significant, and it makes better engagement and good understanding to ensure healthy relationships between people.

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[1] Dhammapada Verse 223, Uttara Upasika Vatthu.
[2] Domyo, "Buddha's Teachings: The Four Brahmaviharas, or Sublime Social Attitudes - Part 1," *The Zen Studies Podcast* (blog), August 26, 2018, https://zenstudiespodcast.com/brahmaviharas-3/.

4. Equanimity (Pāli: *upekkhā*, Sanskrit: *upekṣā*): is even-mindedness and serenity, treating everyone impartially

The final element is *Upekkhā*, meaning freedom or equanimity. Equanimity is a perfect, unshakable balance of mind, having a non-reactive mind, rooted in insight and looking at the world around us, and looking into our own heart, we see clearly how difficult it is to attain and maintain the balance of mind. If the mind is balanced the relationship between people flourishes instantly and when the mind is balanced, both people within them should have freedom, and feel free within the association which can enrich the social cohesion. The opposite of *Upekkhā* is distress, particularly when we encounter suffering. There should also be freedom within the relationship between diverse people if one can cultivate this element, being able to feel comfortable in sharing ideas and thoughts without fear of judgment.

It is known that working with these four conceptual ideas (*Brahmavihārās*) to ensure love and compassion may ensure social cohesion among people. Therefore, these elements have a more considerable practical way to make a better relationship between diverse religious adherents and this can be defined as the outer dimension of the process of social cohesion. Briefly, through the conceptual ideas of *Brahmavihārās* (Four sublime attitudes) can grasp that human being must live with right mindfulness which reduces violence and extremism and promote social cohesion, peacefully with other people, other living organisms, and with his self-own. For that self-love or inner peace is very important when ensuring social cohesion. So, Buddhist conceptual ideas on social cohesion have more significant insights and attractive forms.

Discussion

The contemporary world order has generated an urgent need for frequent interactions between people of different civilizations, cultures, and religions which may promote understanding and constructive relationships. Undeniably, according to this textual study, the teachings of Islam and Buddhism with their shared ethical and spiritual values can contribute to social cohesion and reconciliation among the people of different faiths of the world.

In this essay, an attempt has been made to provide a comparison between Islam and Buddhism with textual evidence that promotes social cohesion. It is mentioned that to attain social cohesion, it is necessary to

consider the inner and outer dimensions of the process of social cohesion and the inner dimension contains accepting diversity while the outer dimension contains love and compassion with others. Therefore, the following table tries to describe the textual analysis from Islamic and Buddhist views.

Table 1: Inner and Outer dimensions of social cohesion in Islam and Buddhism.

	Objective	Islam	Buddhism
Inner Dimension (Theoretical Level)	To understand the diversity	All human beings are from a common origin[1]	All human beings are from a common origin[2]
		Diversity is part and partial of the law of nature (*Sunnat allāh*) and the diversity in the human family as the inherent divine order in creation to promote mutual understanding (*ta'āruf*)	According to the Brahmajāla Sutta, there were many teachings and schools of thought in Bharat (ancient India) during the period of the Buddha. However, the Buddha did not come to condemn the pagan monks and their teachings.
		To you shall be your religion and to me shall be my religion[3]	Four noble truths bring correct understanding about the cause of conflict
		Medina Charter and agreement of prophet Muhammad with Najran monks	I do not call him a Brahmin merely because he is born of a Brahmin womb or sprung from a Brahmin mother. Being with impediments, he should address others as "sir." But he who is free from impediments, free from clinging--him I call a Brahmān[4]
Outer	To behave	God is considered as	Compassion is *Metta* in Pali

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[1] Quran 49:13
[2] Aggañña Sutta which is the collection's 27th Sutta from the Digha Nikaya
[3] Quarn 109:06
[4] Dhammapada 393, 396

Dimension (Practical Level)	with others by love and compassion	*Rahmān*, and *Rahim* (most merciful and compassionate)	and *Maitri* in Sanskrit, both derived from *Mitra*, or friend, thus, both words mean "true friendliness" and often reflect in Buddhism
		And do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good[1]	Buddhist history mentions that Lord Buddha visited Sri Lanka three times[2] and twice this was to remove the hatred and establish peace and harmony based on love and kindness.
		None of you has faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself[3]	*Brahmavihārās* meditation and its core achievements and objectives, which cover the improvement of feelings of friendliness (Maitri), joy and goodwill (Mudita), compassion (Karuna) and acceptance and equanimity (Upeksha).
Final Attainment		*Jannah* (Heavenly life hereafter)	*Nirvana* (liberation from repeated birth)

Although the above chart clarifies the similarity of the texts which promote social cohesion yet, relatively few events have led to arrogance between these two religions' adherents and increase the doubt of each other. However, through understanding religious basics and guidance, bonds of cooperation and companionship can flourish. Both traditions hold that perceptions and actions of individuals through ethical behavior and moral codes are the main and most important steps towards ensuring social cohesion. In Buddhism, this transformation is achieved through the realization of Buddhahood, while Muslims seek the same goals via the realization of the knowledge of Allah or Creator. Similarly, the ultimate goal of the Buddhist teaching is attaining Nirvana and escaping from this life while in Islam obtaining paradise and better life hereafter.

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[1] Quran 2:195

[2] See: *Durutu Poya*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 12, 2020, from http://dhammacakka.weebly.com/35033540351535403501354035083548352435483514.html

[3] Sahih al-Buhari, Vol. 1, Book 2, Hadith 13, Sunnah.com, accessed August 5, 2021, https://sunnah.com/bukhari:13.

In truth, the guidelines that have been formulated by Islam and Buddhism are not religious harmony, but harmony among religious people. Whenever social cohesion has existed, it has been based on unity despite differences rather than on unity without differences. It is not based on agreeing to agree, but on agreeing to disagree. It can be summarized that both religious texts encourage maintaining social cohesion and harmonious life among different religious adherents yet ultimate salvation is totally different.

Conclusion

It must be noted that, although Islamic and Buddhist traditions were erected over different, even opposite, doctrinal foundations, and are far apart in terms of time, space, and religious contexts, without having had direct traceable historical connections between them, both adopt remarkably similar strategies to ensure social cohesion. Both scripts and religious terms are also vastly different in their writing style and use of language. Hopefully, this study will be able to show that these teachings and practices are very significant and valuable when dealing with contemporary conflict and unrest, especially between these two religious' adherents.

From the above discussion, It can be concluded that the textual analysis on social cohesion from Islam and Buddhism provides a wider room for a comprehensive and universal view on religious texts rather than mere scriptural interpretations. Therefore, this study allows scholars from diverse religions to acknowledge and embrace their doctrinal and theological differences but continue encouragement an intellectual inter-religious understanding through dialog to build a more productive and unbiased conversation now, next, and beyond to reduce clashes and for the betterment of social cohesion.

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