Agree to Disagree: Towards A Peaceful Co-Existence amongst Multi-Religious Community

Setuju untuk Tidak Bersetuju: Kearah Kehidupan Aman Bersama Dikalangan Masyarakat Berbilang Agama

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Abstract

Since the number of intricate problems with regard to peace and security faced by mankind on our sphere has been greater than what they can bear, the survival of human race on earth becomes a significant priority to be contemplated. Despite hard work and continued effort rendered by many experts, they face more serious issues and their resolutions are far from reality. It is because, in the author's mind, rights and responsibilities are not properly observed. Particularly, in the area of religion people have lack of respecting the right of others and most of the times they are irresponsible. Every individual has their own choices according to their culture and belief which may not be acceptable to others. If every individual allows others to enjoy at their own choice while observing his own belief and tradition, we all can live in this world peacefully. This concept of living together with individual choice while respecting other's choice may be called the concept of "agree to disagree" according to the author's work. This ideology, which is yet to be well observed in our society, can surely replace violence with peaceful co-existence in the multi-religious and multi-cultural societies.

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Abstrak

Sejak masalah berkaitan dengan keharmonian dan keselamatan yang dialami manusia melebihi yang boleh ditanggung, kehidupan manusia di dunia ini menjadi satu keutamaan yang perlu dipertimbangkan. Walaupun banyak usaha dan langkah diambil oleh pihak pakar, mereka mengalami masalah lain yang lebih serius dan resolusi mereka adalah jauh dari matlamat. Ini kerana, dalam minda pengarang, hak dan tanggungjawab tidak diperhatikan dengan betul. Terutamanya dalam hal agama, orang kekurangan kehormatan terhadap hak orang lain dan kebanyakkannya adalah tidak bertanggungjawab. Setiap individu mempunyai kepercayaan dan hak masing-masing yang tidak boleh diterima oleh yang lain. Jika setiap individu membenarkan yang lain untuk mempunyai kepercayaan dan hak masing-masing, manusia semua boleh hidup dengan aman. Konsep ini boleh dipanggil sebagai konsep "setuju untuk tidak bersetuju" menurut kajian pengarang. Ideologi ini, yang masih belum diperhatikan dengan sepenuhnya dalam masyarakat kita, pasti boleh menggantikan keganasan dengan kehidupan aman bersama dalam masyarakat berbilang kaum dan budaya.

Kata Kunci: Setuju untuk Tidak Bersetuju, Manusia, Pertikaian Agama, Masyarakat Berbilang Agama, Kehidupan Aman Bersama.

Introduction

The world today is replete with so many unpleasant incidents in the form of bitter conflicts and violence caused most of the time by religious differences among people. This scenario prevents inhabitants of the world to live in peace among themselves. One may ask a question as to how to ensure peace amidst religious conflicts and disputes. Many solutions have been advanced in this respect. One such solution is tolerance. In other words, if right thinking people agree to respect each other's differing views and opinions, the world might become less tolerant to intolerance. The objective of this paper is to analyse the concept of "agree to disagree", and reflect on ways of successful application of agree to disagree concept in the light of some successful world leaders. Historical application of the concept both in principle and practice in the Islamic world is discussed briefly in support of the concept.

The Concept "Agree to Disagree"

The 21ˢᵗ century witnesses amazing revolutions and unbelievable phenomena; some of them seem satisfactory but many of them are appalling. People with different philosophies within a society claiming individual as well as collective rights cause arguable encounters among different religions and ethnic groups. Men do not have a second planet to take refuge. They need to make some kind of readjustment so as to ensure peace on earth. This readjustment here signifies that people with different religions and cultures live together, executing the philosophy of non-interference into each other's way of life. Thus, the idea of multi-religious and multi-cultural people living together in peace may be called the concept of "agree to disagree".

The concept of "agree to disagree" can be strengthened between two contending persons or belligerent groups where both parties recognize that they have differences of the opinions but they wish to talk to each other as antagonism does not yield any benefit in the long term. Generally, people do not wish to change their own ideology; and they also do not want others to alter their way of living the life. The effort to criticize others' opinions without any strong constructive ground begets intolerance and conflict. It is simply because every individual keeps his/her ideas and philosophy of life very dear to himself/herself. And psychologically, the beliefs, opinions and philosophy that develop on the basis of people's experiences and understanding can hardly be similar to those of others.[1] Currently, almost every society is multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-racial. It is universally agreed obligation for all the different elements in the society to live together peacefully. Muslims, Jews, Christians and Buddhists who constitute elements of many multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural societies cannot make themselves indifferent to each other. As human beings they need to communicate amicably to each other on almost all those matters that are directly

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[1] Stacey Edmonson, Sandra Harris & Julie Combs, *Managing Conflict: 50 Strategies for School Leaders* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 11.

related to the development of society. More and more communication to each other strengthens the relationship among them. There are many areas of common concern for all the people in a society, such as political system, economic order, educational curricula, and social development. Despite differences in religion and culture common interest of development may lessen conflict and enhance peace. In this way people can create a beautiful society where every individual can live without any fear and hardship.[2]

Dealing with Differences

Differences of opinions in different races and genders are but natural. The Qur'an reads:

"O mankind, indeed we have crafted 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 All-knowing and All-Aware" (49:13).

This verse highlights that (1) the entire mankind which consists of different tribes, cultures, and colors has descended from the same parents; (2) the multiplicity among children of the same parents is aimed at facilitating the task of recognizing each other; (3) and greatness of people does not lie on any particular tribe and color but on the righteousness and piety. On the other hand, this verse signifies the importance of equilibrium and harmony among creations irrespective of their differences; they have the right to freedom of thought, choice, and selection of their leader, education, religion, provision, and other social activities. One of the most significant freedom people opt for is their religious freedom. People cannot be forced to embrace religion as evident in the Quran. Almighty Allah while addressing the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Had thy

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[2] Ozlem Denli, edited by Muqtedar Khan, *An Islamic Quest for a Pluralistic Political Model* (Oxford: Lexington Book, 2006), 85.

Lord willed, everyone on earth would have believed. Do you then force people to become believers?" (10: 99). This context was further solidified when after the migration another verse was revealed saying that: "There is no compulsion in religion" (2: 256).[3]

Other than Islam, the understanding of differences through freedom of rights is upheld steadfastly by the international and local communities. The United Nation's "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" highlights these rights and understanding of differences among people of the world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 13 said: Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. Article 15 said: Everyone has the right to a nationality. Article 16 said: Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to form a family. A family is the fundamental unit of society and is entitled to protection by the society and the State. Article 18 said: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. These articles exclusively affirm that people on earth are created equal and they have to be treated without discrimination. Everyone has the right to utter their wishes and this has to be respected by others in conformity with the concept of "agree to disagree".[4]

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[3] Mohammed Hashim Kamali, *Freedom of Expression in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Ilmiah Publishers, 1998), 87; Abu Zahrah, *Tanẓīm al-Islām li al-mujtamaʿ* (Cairo: Matbaʿah Mukhaymar, n.d.), 190; ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm Ḥasan al-ʿĪlī, *al-Ḥurriyah al-ʿĀmmah* (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1367 A.H.), 330.

[4] Guðmundur S. Alfreðsson, Asbjørn Eide, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Common Standard of Achievement* (The Hague: Matinuff Nijoff Publisher, 1999), 265

In Islam, disagreement of one's opinion with another is common and it is well understood by majority of scholars that the opinion held by scholars can change according to the possible interpretations of the text (*naṣṣ*). A Hadith reported by Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim is referred to in this regard that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) ordered his companions after the battle of al-Aḥzāb saying: "No one of you should pray "*ʿAṣr*" until you reach to the village of Banī-Qurayzah (A Jewish tribe)."[5] The companions of the Prophet met 'Asr prayer within their journey. Some of them said that "we should not pray until we reach Banī Qurayzah." Others said "we should pray 'Asr prayer now because the Prophet (s.a.w.) did not mean to leave the *ʿAṣr* prayer." With these different interpretations of the Prophet's instruction, some of them prayed *ʿAṣr* prayer before reaching their destination and some prayed upon reaching Banī Qurayzah. When the case was reported to the Prophet (s.a.w.), he did not scold any of them. He accepted both of their opinions. Ibn Ḥajr al-'Asqalāni in commentary of this report quoted Ibn al-Qayim that the Prophet did not reprimand the group that delayed the *ʿAṣr* prayer because of their reliance on the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of his instruction.[6]

In the same context, Imam Baihaqī in his famous work *al-Madkhal ilā al-Sunan al-Kubrā* attributed a report to Ibn Abbas that the Messenger of Allah said: "Whenever certain ruling comes to you from the Book of Allah it will be practiced. There is no excuse to abandon it. If not from the Book of Allah, then practice will be according to my previous Sunnah. If not from my Sunnah, then practice will be according to what my companion says. Verily my companions are like the stars in the heaven. Whoever you choose to follow, you will be on guidance. The <u>difference</u>

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[5] *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Chapter 59: Expedition, vol. 5, hadith no. 445; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalāni, *Fatḥ al-Bārī bi Sharḥ Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2004), vol. 2, 502 (ḥadīth 946, Bab 5, Kitāb 12) & vol. 7, 469 (hadith 4119, Bab 30, Kitāb 64).

[6] Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalāni, *Fatḥ al-Bārī bi Sharḥ Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2004), vol. 7, 469-472.

among my companions is mercy for you."[7] In Some reports the wording goes as "the difference of my *ummah* is mercy for the people." As far as the wording of this report is concerned, many scholars have declared it to be a weak report or disconnected report. Imam Suyuti goes to the extent that there is possibility that the narrators of this report were stated in some of the early works but did not reach us.[8] However, the implication (*mafhūm*) of the report is widely accepted and expressed both by the companion of the companions and the jurist-consuls (*fuqahā'*). Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz is reported saying that I will not like the companions of Messenger of Allah to not to disagree. This is because if there is only one opinion for every matter, people will be in stress. The companions were the followed-Imams. If someone decides to take one of their opinions, he has the liberty to do so.[9] When Harun al-Rashid said to Imam Malik that he will copy his books and distribute it among Muslims to practice according to it, Imam Malik answered that O the leader of the faithful, difference among the scholars (*'ulamā'*) is mercy for the *ummah*. Every scholar follows what is correct to him. Every one of them is on guidance, and each one of them intends for the pleasure of Almighty Allah.[10] Our purpose here is to make the point that disagreement in terms of arguments (*dalā'il*) or in terms of interpretations of a divine text was taken positively as taught by the Prophet (peace be upon him). Emotional sentiments were not impeded with the differing opinions of the scholars leading to intolerant sectarianism. Preference of differing opinions was based on solving people's hardships. This is how such opinions became mercy for the people. As far as the status of the report is concerned we

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[7] Al-Bayhaqī, Abu Bakr Aḥmad ibn Husayn, *Al-Madkhal ilā' al-Sunan al-Kubrā* (Al Kuwait: Al-Sabahiyyah Dārul-Khulafā Li al-Kitāb, 1983), 162-163.

[8] Al-Suyuti, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaghīr min Ḥadīth al-Bashīr wa al-Nadhīr* (Makkah: Maktabah Naẓẓār Muṣtafā al-Bāz, n.d.), vol. 1, 71.

[9] Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, Abū ʿUmar Yūsuf Ibn ʿAbd Allah, *Jāmiʿ Bayān al-ʿilm wa Fadhlihī* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥaẓm, 2010).

[10] Ismāʿīl Ibn Muḥammad al-Jarāḥī, *Kashf al-Khifā wa Muzīl al-Ilbās* (Makkah: Abbas Aḥmad al-Bāz, n.d.), vol. 1, 56.

relied on a succinct discussion due to the nature of our ongoing discussion. Interested readers can read a detailed discussion of the hadith, status of its wordings, and wide acceptance of its implication stretched in a fatwa of Mufti Ebrahim Desai of South Africa.[11]

The concept "Agree to disagree" and its application in the political arena can be traced back to the era of Prophet (peace be upon him) and his engagement with his community in Medina. The Prophet primarily wrote and promulgated the Medina Constitution providing the best opportunities and facilities to the residences of Medina irrespective of their belief and tribe. The Medina constitution having 63 articles assured the safety and security of all citizens of Medina as long as they respected it. The number of citizens of the time was about ten thousand inclusive of immigrants form Makkah, hosts (*anṣār*) from Medina, Jewish tribes and Christians living there for centuries. The most outstanding point in this constitution is that it organized different people with different religions and culture into one nation. It provided peace, justice and security to everyone allowing a peaceful co-existence.[12]

Islam always maintained the idea of peaceful and harmonious co-existence in multi-racial and multi-religious societies as its nominal position. This was even evident in the era of Caliph Umar (634-643 AD). During those days, Caliph Umar's administration was seen as a fair and successful state. In the early period of 637 AD, Arab forces led by Khālid bin Walīd encircled Jerusalem which had been under the rule of the Byzantine Empire, but the governor and Arch Bishop Sophronius had not surrendered the city insisting they would only do so if Caliph Umar himself took over the city. Umar believed his arrival would prevent blood-

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[11] "The difference among my 'ulamā' is mercy," Ask Imam Online Islamic Q & A with Mufti Ebrahim Desai, www.askimam.org/public/question_detail/16588, (accessed on 01 May 2017).

[12] Ozlem Denli, edited by Muqtedar Khan, *An Islamic Quest for a Pluralistic Political Model* (Oxford: Lixinton Book, 2006), 85.

shed inevitably thus he decided to travel to Jerusalem. Umar's treaty became the standard for Muslim-Christian relations throughout the Byzantine Empire. The Treaty allowed the Christians of Jerusalem religious freedom. He gave them an assurance of safety for themselves, for their property, their churches, their crosses, the sick and healthy of the city and for all the rituals related to their religion. Their churches would not be inhabited by Muslims and will not be destroyed. Neither they, nor the land, on which they stand, nor their cross, nor their property will be damaged. With regards to Jewish people, Umar allowed them to worship on the Temple Mount and the Wailing Wall, while the Byzantines banned them from such activities. It was Umar who established a history of such repute in Jerusalem which is holy to the three monotheistic faiths – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.[13]

A balance between tolerating the difference and accepting conditions is the crucial point that can generate the positive energy for co-existence in multi-cultural societies. As Calip Umar made this balance a reality, Sultan Saladin also treaded the latter's path. In the period of Sultan Saladin (1137–1193 AD), his initial rule was overwhelmed with racial disharmony and tribal disputes where injustice and hatred were widespread in the country. When Saladin came in power, he brought peace and security for his people irrespective of their religions and races. When he was in his childhood, five-century long peace treaty established by Caliph Umar in Jerusalem was ended by the European Crusaders who took over Jerusalem from the Muslim rulers in 1099 AD. However, when Saladin recaptured the Jerusalem in 1187 AD at the battle of Hattin, he neither killed the Christians nor the Jews but showed his utmost mercy safeguarding security of life and properties of non-Muslims. In fact, the Christians were expecting a similar onslaught from Saladin, however, he not only spared the Christians but also treated them honorably. To

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[13] Mike M. Joseph, Jerusalem's Temple Mount: *The Hoax of the Millennium* (Bloomington: Library of Congress Press, 2011), 124-130.

achieve a peaceful co-existence between the Christians and the Muslims, Saladin applied tolerance while he was progressive in his faith.[14]

The Ottoman Empire also saw polices that held co-existence between Muslims and non-Muslims with significance. The Ottoman rule lasted about 600 years starting from 1299 AD till 1923 AD. In the beginning of 17th century, the empire contained 32 provinces and numerous small states. The rulers of the empire were Muslims basically, but majority of the population about 80% were considered as non-Muslims. How the Ottomans ruled such a big empire for 600 years is not a secret. A political system called the Nation or Millet System was effective and suitable for every nation within empire because it was an autonomous administrative system also known as the self-rule. In this system, every state was able to avail their own administration, judicial system and there was no forced conversion to any religion. It meant that people could elect their own leader who could assemble the state's administration. People become comfortable with their own way of ruling and living. Islamic law was not applied upon non-Muslims, instead the non-Muslims were permitted to produce, consume and sell alcohols with certain conditions.[15]

We saw our thesis "Agree to disagree" being applied in the practical realm of the past successfully. This thesis is not time constrained. The Muslims effectively apply it even in our contemporary time. For instance, Malaysia is a tolerant, multicultural, and multi-religious country where people from different decent and religious backgrounds live without any violence and conflict. When various sectors of Malaysian society including foreign expatriates and workers who amount to nearly 6 million were surveyed, the majority of them expressed genuine satisfaction

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[14] Ibid., *Christopher Tyerman*, 317.

[15] Ibid., 318.

2. PBS series Islam: *Empire of Faith, Caroline Finkel, The history of Ottoman Empire, Osman's Dream*: USA, UK, 2005.

to be in Malaysia. Although they have differences of opinion, religious perception and cultural backgrounds they seemed pleased because they said that they can work and earn a living efficiently, and can live freely and peacefully. The Malaysian government emphasizes on issues related to security, equality and justice particularly in religious, social, employment and cultural sectors. These areas are the somewhat sensitive. Ignorance of these sectors would cause a heavy price in building a peaceful co-existence. On the other hand, it can lead to social violence, riots and racial conflicts consequential to the decline of economy. The welfare of the people is being taken care of by the Malaysian government feasibly through accepting the differences among people in terms of their race and religion. [16]

Beside the governments, prominent individuals have also exercised the approach to agree and accept the difference for a greater cause which is peaceful co-existence. Nelson Mandela is one of those individuals who showed the 21st century the power of this approach. The victory achieved by Nelson Mandela exemplified the element of peaceful coexistence between two opposite groups or warring camps in South Africa. The success brought by Nelson Mandela ended years of enmity between the white who had been holding the power for centuries and the oppressing the black race openly. The outburst of black races and freedom movement against the white rule was initiated by a group of university students and miners. It was Nelson Mandela who stood as a leading figure and the entire black race without any qualms followed him. The white government was utterly annoyed, and in return jailed Nelson Mandela for 27 years, keeping him away from his community to weaken the revolution. This political dead lock, in the end, forced the white to sit with the black for a political settlement while the Prime-Minister De Clerk of the white government agreed to negotiate with the leaders of ANC. Nelson Mandela was released and both De Clerk and Mandela formulated a

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[16] Osman Bakar, edited by Muqtedar Khan, *Islamic Democratic Discourse, Theory, Debates, and Philosophical Perspectives* (London: Lexinton Book, 2006), 63.

peace process for South Africa in the year 1993. The peace talk became successful and established a historical election in 1994. 22 million South African unanimously elected Nelson Mandela as the president of South Africa. Consequently, both De Clerk and Nelson Mandela earned together a Nobel Peace Prize, making the world cheerful and wonderful. In this way, people from different backgrounds, races and religions today in South Africa live together peacefully without any discrimination. This achievement was possible when both leaders agreed with their differences instead of insisting to stand on their own grounds.[17]

"Agree to Disagree" As a Resolution for Presentday Conflicts

The present century has seen the worse forms of conflicts. Efforts are also on rise to reverse the world back to a peaceful biosphere. A simple to complex spectrum of methods have been endorsed to overcome conflicts. The simplest and effective method is to draw a mutual agreement of differences between the conflicting parties. Peace and harmony has prevailed through this method irrespective of whether the conflict is within or beyond the borders. Religious discrimination and exploitation is a serious crime. The arising of conflicts among the nations because of the religious, cultural, and ethnic difference holds the lion's share. Such conflicts are found between two religious groups where one is a majority group supported by the state authority and the other is an oppressed minority group. Religious belief is an element which is deeply rooted into the people and not easily forgotten. People's emotional strings are easily pulled when religion is insulted in any form. They are pruned to revenge the assailant, even if their revenge costs them their entire belongings. Since religious sentiments is a sensitive and dynamic force. The exploiters dexterously use it for their personal objectives. This requires every member of the society to be cautious of rulers who have this type of inclinations. The leaders from religious circle such as monks from Buddhist monasteries, molvis from Islamic offices, pandits from Hindu tem-

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[17] Peter limb, *Nelson Mandela A Biography* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008), 2-10.

ples and priests from churches are required to play a crucial role, identifying these types of unscrupulous leaders. They should advise the people of their dirty tactics and selfish schemes to prevent the country from falling into tragedies and maintain peaceful cohesion. [18]

In addition, differences does not only arise among the individual followers but also in the highest level of various inter-religious organizations (Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism, etc.) as well as intra-religious organizations (Sunnī, Shīʿah, etc.). Identifying them is a challenge followed by methods of reconciliation. More efforts are required to assert into intra-religious organizations for harmony. Efficient and rational leaders are needed to be trained who will be the assets for the country. They will be dedicated to bring peace and unity the essential element for building inter and intra religious harmony. These leaders will be able to work with other religious groups. They can use different means for resolution of conflicts, but the simplest and the most effective way is to allow the religious groups to maintain their religious sentiments and religious practices.[19]

The Basic idea for **inter-religious dialogue** is to know each other. Through this dialogue, religious groups can generate intimacy, brotherly feeling towards each other. It is a meeting among different religious groups, agreeing to sit together, respecting the rights and providing the need of each other while working together to create a peaceful co-existence in a society. The main objective of the dialogue is an understanding of creating a good relationship, interaction, between communities of different religions. It will not be of benefit if they stay separate,

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[18] Christopher Moore, "*The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict*" San Francisco Jossey-Bass Publishers, (1996), http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/moor7538.htm, accessed on 16 June, 2016.

[19] Pim Valkenberg, *Sharing lights on the way to God, Muslim-Christian Dialogue and theology in the Context of Abrahamic Partnership: Amsterdam* (New York: Rodovi PV Edition, 2006), 100-101.

thus, both parties should be advised to allow their members to live within a society where people from different classes such as white collar, Blue collar, business-men, laborers, salesman, students and ordinary layman interact and communicate. They can involve in business, educational activities, and other social responsibilities. The crucial element is the understanding between communities that will play an intensive role in building mutual harmony, the very objective of the dialogue. Thus, the first aim of the dialogue is just simply to develop friendship and appreciation for each other.[20]

The interreligious dialogue also seeks for ideas that can reduce causes of differences between them and prevent any unforeseeable conflict in the future. Beside this, the members of religious groups have to establish trust for each other. Without trust all their efforts will be wasted. After establishment of trust, both parties are supposed to promise each other not to break the terms and conditions of their agreement of peaceful co-existence. They have to avoid talks, deeds, actions, arguments and agreements that could trigger pride, intimidation, selfishness, backbiting, injustice, hatred, etc. These can easily disturb the harmony and damage the peaceful co-existence. The concept of agree to disagree is strongly related to inter-religious dialogue because it does not promote a special religious belief that has to be accepted by all followers of different religions, but it is just a discussion endorsing significance of self-respect and respecting the belief of others while maintaining one's own religious belief. However, it urges the participants to avoid criticizing other religious beliefs, instigating religious conflict, producing hate-talk and labeling imperfection and failure of other religion. The important objective of creation of harmony and desire to peaceful co-existence has to be maintained in every moment of the dialogue.[21]

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[20] Ibid., 134.

[21] Edward McWhinney, *Conflict and Compromise: International Law and World Order in a Revolutionary Age* (Alphen aan den Rijn: CBC Merchandising, 1981), 95.

Intra-religious dialogue is a basic but very useful mechanism for settling religious based conflict within the domain of intra-religious organizations. This dialogue is held in a certain religious tradition to facilitate or apply an intra-religious dialogue. In this regard, an objective is set up and to be followed by the responsible, including scholars, and followers of all religious bodies. That objective is to maintain harmony and peace among intra-religious organizations with a spiritual mindset. If peace and harmony is set up unanimously among intra-faith organization, it will be a cornerstone to achieve unity and strength.

A religious organization with full discipline, high level of standards and morality can furnish their members with those moral values which are crucial for any social interaction and coherence. These members with great values, steadfastness and quality will become great assets for their own organization. Once a group of religious organizations are fortified with dutiful and disciplined members, the organization will be able to deal with any individual or organization in the society comfortably.

Organizing Islamic organizations in the Islamic world and settling their differences is also part of intra-religious dialogue. The existing era has witnessed many unfortunate events in various parts of the Muslim world especially Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The reason presented is absence or lack of justice, brotherhood, unity and misunderstanding, chiefly in the area of religion and politics. Under the banner of Islam, scholars from different organizations criticize each other by issuing irrelevant fatwa be it for politics or religion. This causes unending disputes such as labeling each other with blasphemy, criminal injustice, illegal marriage, and the list goes on. Once a fatwa is issued by the leader or scholar of an organization, the followers feel obliged on their part to implement the fatwa and take actions against those who oppose either in the form of demonstration or in the form of violence. This irrational action comes in diverse forms leading to harming, fighting, killing, suicide-bombing, civil unrest and war. How can this situation be controlled?

What is the solution? Till now, there has been no due consideration given to dispute in an individual domain of a religion, so it has become uncontrollable. The undesirable impact of this type of problem can be seen largely in Iraq, Syria and Pakistan. In fact, a simple, but effective method is setting up a dialogue among all religious organizations under the banner of Islam. The most important point to be pondered in the meeting is to follow the guidance of the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (s.w.a.). [22]

As our Beloved Prophet Muhammad (s.w.a.) said, one will not be a true believer (*mu'min*) unless he loves his brother the way he loves himself. If we love our brother the way, the Prophet said, we will not fight each other the way it is happening in many Islamic countries. Once a person is peaceful, his family will be able to enjoy the benefits generating from peace. Gradually the positive energy of peace will extend into the entire society and the country. Thus, all responsible people including the scholars (*'Ulamā'*), muftis, *Sharī'ah* committees, administrators and the rest should know the importance of being helpful to each other while contributing their participation by stopping hatred and hate-talk among followers of different organizations in the society. They have to design their opinions that will not create negative impact or instigate fire of conflict in the society. Some suggestions for conflict resolution are proposed below as an advice for individuals and organizations working on conflict resolution:

[1] List down all organizations under the name of Islam wishing to work for the benefit of Muslims,

[2] invite all organizations under the umbrella of Ministry of religious affairs or its equivalent to sit for intra-faith dialogue,

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[22] Ibid., 44-46; Simon Monbaron, *How to develop peace in the world, Subdue the coming the new age of reality* (Sutherlin: Simon Munberon, 2003), 136-166.

[3] Every organization agrees to accept the concept of agree to dis-agree where the right of every organization is recognized,

[4] Every organization can hold their opinion, while accepting the others to hold their own opinion,

[5] Intra-religious dialogue meeting schedule needs to be set up at least twice a year,

[6] Organizational leaders are responsible to advise their followers and scholars to adhere to the agreement reached in intra-faith dialogue,

[7] Intra organizational discipline within Islamic domain is set up as code of conduct and standard disciplines,

[8] For any dispute occurring between two scholars, leaders or organizations, it is better to arrange a face to face dialogue through a reliable mediation process.

[9] Settling a dispute behind the curtain is the best policy as both sides need to maintain their dignity. Unnecessary media and social media coverage of the event should be avoided.

[10] A study of intention and objective of the opponent in the disputed subject is advisable,

[11] Denouncing the opponent in public, particularly in Friday sermon have to come to a stop.

[12] Scholars should know that they are being watched by many eyes from different societies thus they should be very careful about their action and speech because they are public figures and responsible for peace and harmony,

[13] No scholar should ultimately think that their religious finding and solution to any dispute is absolutely correct and there may be some error in his finding. Everyone should remember the saying of Imam Abu Hanifa "my writing is right, but there is some possibility of error as well as my opponent's writing might be wrong, but there is possibility of correctness",[23]

[14] Promotion of unity and prevention of dispute is the prime objective of intra-faith dialogue, while looking at the cohesion that existed between the Prophet Muhammad (s.w.a.) and his companions; how they were united resulting to the rise of Islamic civilization,

[15] The role of Ministry of religious affair and the home affair or its equivalent is keeping vigilant eye on those individuals who disturb law and order. There should be an administrative office looking after the management of Islamic religious affairs in accordance with Islamic religious law. The office is accountable for any type of intra-religious dispute. On the other hand, the government should also be partly responsible to coordinate their activities and arrange annual or bi-annual meetings for all organizations,

[16] Every government is responsible to promote a good educational system where everyone receives basic education as compulsory. Establishing Universities and higher educational facilities are one of the major projects of education ministry but vocational training for those

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[23] Asgharali Engineer, *The Qur'an, Women, and Modern Society* (New Delhi: New Down Press Group, 2005), 3.

who could not put in the effort for higher education must be set up. When people are educated a rational mind is developed. If everyone is in a state of rationality, they love peace, justice and harmony, and basic value of a prosperous state,

[17] Training, workshops, seminar and conferences, awareness of moderation and promotion of the concept of agree to disagree are periodically needed to be offered in order to remove undesirable extremism from our society,

[18] The role of the media is also very crucial; generally, the message is spread very fast to every corner of the country and people react spontaneously to the message either good or bad. Thus, media should disseminate correct, proper as well as rational message so that peace, tranquility and reasonableness is maintained in the country. In addition, the readers and audience should be given periodically educational information relevant to politics, economy, security, inter-faith dialogue, cultural, ethical values, altruism and social activities in order to promote a peaceful co-existence in the country.

Conclusion

Bitter conflicts and deprivation of peace has stolen the wellbeing from every aspect of mankind be it physical or be it spiritual. It is impossible to have same emotions and needs just as it is impossible to have all human identical race and culture wise. Despite the very nature of humans to be different from each other in their choices and preferences, individuals and organizations exhaust their efforts searching for solace without any avail. This is because they are looking for it in the wrong place. Solace can be found in the very place of conflict. We just have to change the way we are looking at the elements of the conflict. The elements of the conflict are the differences. Instead of eliminating the differences we just have to accept the differences, hence agree to disagree. A deeper viewpoint on agree to disagree elucidates that it is the sentiment and the emo-

tion attached with the different opinions that lead to intolerance. One party's blinded attachment does not allow them to accept other party's having their own opinions. The historical illustrations of agree to disagree both in the Islamic world and non-Islamic world showed us that parties involved, freed themselves from emotional attachment. If a party held to a deferring position, it was looked upon as a solution for their problem, while the opposing party maintained their own position. Great leaders applied this concept to achieve inter-religious and intra-religious solidarity.