Interfaith dialogue; role of diverse trends in peace building

Sidrah Shoaib *(corresponding author)*
Associate lecturer Islamic Studies,
The Islamia University, Bahawalpur
Email: almasakhtar43@yahoo.com

Dr. Asia Shabbir
Associate professor,
Department of Islamic Studies,
Lahore College for Women University, Lahore

KEYWORDS

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE, MUSLIM FBOS, SOCIAL MEDIA, MOSQUES. PEACE BUILDING.

ABSTRACT

The history of interfaith dialogue is as old as the history of man. From the beginning of mankind, there have been differences of opinion among different groups of individuals. It has never been the case that all human beings on the planet have the same religion or culture, so since the beginning of humanity, interfaith harmony has been sought at one level or another. But today, as the world has become a global village, it is impossible to ignore other nations and religions, and the need for inter-religious harmony is being felt more than ever. This research paper examines the effectiveness of various current trends by evidence-based research methodology and examines Muslim efforts and their impact, especially in the context of anti-Islamic extremism embedded in Europe. Some useful strategies have been pointed out, which can be adopted to achieve inter-religious harmony and peace in a much better way.

1-Introduction

The expression "interfaith dialogue" can be defined as joint, productive and encouraging relations among citizens of different religions and civilizations or sacred or spiritual attitudes Attitude of equality at the personal and organizational points. It is different from making a new or substitute faith. The interfaith dialogue frequently engages in encouraging acceptance among diverse faiths to augment understanding and recognition of others to a certain extent than to manufacture innovative religions. All over the globe, there are limited and extensive interfaith programs, several are officially or casually associated and make up bigger systems and coalitions. The term interfaith and interreligious should not be confused with each other. The world council of churches WCC defined interreligious dialogue as a dialogue within the same religion or faith.[1] It was first introduced by Christianity when "after reformation and renaissance, the Christian world was bitterly divided. The various denominations referred to one another as infidels (kafirs). The Vatican rejected the protestant church as "rebellious" and therefore the followers as infidels. The protestant churches hurled the same accusation at the Catholics. Additionally, the protestant denominations were equally hostile to each other. During that time, intra-Christian relations were at their lowest point in history. Then over time, mainstream protestant denominations decided to dialogue with each other to find common ground in order to ease tension and build relations among themselves. This movement was known as the Christian Ecumenical (family unity) movement."[2] But interfaith dialogue refers to dialogue and understanding between different religions like Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism etc.

2-History of interfaith dialogue

History of the interfaith dialogue is very complex. In fact, from ancient times, neighboring realms always tend to explore and understand each other's faith to make a good defense strategy against each other. Ottoman Empire and Mughal emperor Akbar e Azam are recognized as initiators of interfaith dialogue for interfaith harmony and peacebuilding in the history of Muslim India/world. Christians were the biggest minority in the Ottoman Empire, and Hindus were a majority in the Mughal Empire.[3]

The Mughal Emperor Akbar-e-Azam organized the first organized form of interfaith dialogue we find in the history to encourage tolerance between people of different religions living in India, as Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Christianity existed simultaneously in the Indian sub-continent.

2.1-Interfaith dialogue in 20th century

During the 20th century interfaith dialogue congregated interest of the whole world especially it was started formally between Islam, Christianity and Judaism. "During late 1960s interfaith factions such as the Clergy and CALC connected about issues regarding Civil rights of American

Africans and afterward they become frequently verbal in their hostility to the Vietnam War."[4]In the current scenario, interfaith dialogue in a broad-spectrum and Muslim Christian dialogue in scrupulous are tremendously vital activities, Certainly, believers of dissimilar religions typically have a little comprehensive understanding of other religions. Meanwhile, reciprocal delusion and discrimination are widespread and have an effect on strategy as well as on inter social associations and affairs.Islam and Muslims are the objective of several detrimental approaches and strategies in current times. At the same time, evangelical Christians as an electorate hold a noteworthy authority and control over strategy and policy architects in the US and UN. Consequently, the meticulous interfaith dialogue is important in order to converse dissimilarities as well as, finding out general arguments connecting Muslims and Christians. It has the highest significance on convenient strategy stages and on a personal level also.

2.2-Ottoman Empire and interfaith dialogue

The government of Ottoman Empire of the Balkans since 15th to 19th[5] century presented a new chronological model of normally non-violence between people of different faiths living together as well as Sufi and non-Sufi Muslims, Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians. The broadminded background of that age differs spectacularly by means of the cultural conflict and carnage in the state throughout the Yugoslav confrontations.

2.3-Interfaith dialogue in 20th century

During the 20th century interfaith dialogue congregated interest of the whole world especially it was started formally between Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

> "During late 1960s interfaith factions such as the Clergy and CALC connected about issues regarding Civil rights of American Africans and afterward they become frequently verbal in their hostility to the Vietnam War."[6]

In the current scenario, interfaith dialogue in a broad-spectrum and Muslim Christian dialogue in scrupulous are tremendously vital activities, particularly in present world and in nation states' biased certainties. Certainly, believers of dissimilar religions typically have a little comprehensive understanding of other religions. Meanwhile, reciprocal delusion and discrimination are widespread and have an effect on strategy as well as on inter social associations and affairs.Islam and Muslims are the objective of several detrimental approaches and strategies in current times. At the same time, evangelical Christians as an electorate hold a noteworthy authority and control over strategy and policy architects in the US and UN. Consequently, the meticulous interfaith dialogue is important in order to converse dissimilarities at the same time, finding out general arguments connecting Muslims and Christians. It has the highest significance on convenient strategy stages and on a personal level also.

3-Fears, objections and successes of interfaith dialogue

In current circumstances when demonizing of Muslims and Islam has constantly been advocated by the media, Muslims claim that such interaction is actually designed to expand the West's political, military, economic and cultural influence, westernize Muslims and Muslim countries, make Muslims lose political, economic and cultural independence, eradicate Islam and Islamic way of life, and convert all people to Christianity."[7] But a lot many Muslim scholars argue that fear of religious dialogue actually expresses a lack of faith, confidence, and spiritual patience. This shortage leads to the loss of the opportunity to introduce Islam to non-Muslims. But to contact the West and its multicultural societies through debate is an even better option which can increase knowledge and understanding of Islam. Fear can be replaced by self-confidence in Muslims and can be used to build a better understanding of Muslims by connecting and engaging others in common projects. Muslims who engage in such practices have a golden opportunity to represent Islam as the true and peaceful religion enshrined in the Holy Qur'an. Many people who have never met a Muslim or come in contact with a Muslim in practical life can enjoy that opportunity.[8]

4-Objections on interfaith dialogue:

This is an undeniable fact that the interfaith dialogues and conferences held today generally cause some evils and harms also. In the present time of political accuracy Muslims find themselves powerless while defending their religious rights against hateful behavior of the west. In the absence of Muslim political power, it has become anti-Semitic for Muslims to raise their voice against the violence imposed on a daily basis upon the people of Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon by the hands of Jews. As it is turns out chauvinistic to articulate those Muslim men and woman should dress moderately and dissimilarly or have to give out distinct functions in different positive occurrences.Famous Muslim scholar Abu Asiya described his personal experience of attending interfaith dialogues as a monologue. He argued that, less than a decade ago, homosexuality was considered a disease, documented in psychiatric and medical literature for centuries. And for thousands of years, homosexual acts have been regarded as crimes against humanity. These days, however, speaking out against it can cost high to a person, such as losing his job or tagging him as backward and outdated. Muslims are the people who promote righteousness and prevent evil from people who say, well, to each other as long as I am not involved in evil. We can do well. We can pray in time, we can fast regularly, and be good to our parents. But if we do not resist evil when we are introduced to it, we allow it to continue. Thus, interfaith discussions provide Muslims a forum to stop or at least resist evil. Moreover, interfaith discussions are places of training as a group for Muslims to stop forbidding from evil. In an effort to make Islam liberal and more attractive to non-

Muslims, we sometimes, distort Islam and this is especially true on the issues/topics of polygamy and jihad.[9]

Regarding the concept of jihad in the context of Quran, Jihad means the struggle for good against evil. This struggle also includes the suppression of the lower self to reach a state of higher God-consciousness that leads to a pure soul. Jihad can take place in many forms, including speaking out against injustice or spending your wealth in the cause of public good, such as alleviating poverty etc. However, the often-highlighted aspect of Jihad under discussion remains the armed struggle. No doubt, the aspect of armed struggle is important which at times becomes necessary in order to protect the weak and to establish freedom of the religion, yet it does not constitute the whole discussion on Jihad. "However, participation in interfaith dialogues often reduces jihad to an inner struggle rather than an outward struggle, when in fact, it is both...and actually, with a strong emphasis on the outward form. In an effort to please the audience and to try to make Islam pleasing to the other members of the interfaith gathering, jihad is often diluted, and its role in the war is often downplayed, ignored, or distorted. If we do not fight against the enemies of Allah, who will stop evil when it rears its ugly face? If we do not fight oppressors, we are allowing oppression to continue. In this day and age, there is a tendency to perceive all war as evil. However, this is simply not the case. There is a thing as a just war. The problem lies in the fact that outsiders view war as fighting, death, and destruction. Whereas participants in war have quite a different view, that is, when people are thrown out of their homes, separated from their families, robbed, and raped, it is just and appropriate for them to fight back. It is just and appropriate for someone else to come to their aid. To "turn the other cheek" may have its place, but not here. Once negotiation and diplomacy have failed, war is the only option. Turning the other cheek in this case serves only to allow the spread of evil and injustice to continue. Interfaith dialogues weaken the Muslims. Muslims represent approximately 20% of the world's population, but over 80% of the world's refugees! This is only the case because we have left jihad. To distort its definition is to make the weaker Muslims amongst us think twice when called for jihad."[10]Another objection on interfaith dialogue is making people feel that they need to be silent or compromised in order to be accepted by others. This often happens when participants in a discussion encounter an irrefutable difference, for example, whether Jesus was a prophet (Islamic faith) or whether he was the Son of God (Christian belief). Ideally, interfaith dialogue should help each participant better understand his or her religion and identify areas where their religion differs. In the specified case, both parties must agree to disagree. They need to accept the differences and seek to understand them without compromising their beliefs. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encountered a similar situation while negotiating a treaty with non-Muslims. They

offered to serve his god for one year if he promised to serve their many gods the following year. His answer is a great example of interfaith harmony, which is described in Chapter 109, verse 6 of the Holy Qur'an: "Because you are your religion and my religion is in mine."[11]

5-Success examples of interfaith dialogue

The aim of an interfaith dialogue is to build logical conversation which paves a way to move on though recognizing the dissimilarities and complexities of different religions an accurate conversation never tries to find escape dissimilarities and complexities of different religions. Manifestation is a vital feature of dialogue. That's why there are, some success stories of interfaith dialogue also which are encouraging and boost the confidence of world for interfaith dialogue as

5.1-The Alexandria agreement 2002

Top religious leaders, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, the dean of the el-Azhar seminary in Cairo, and a chief rabbi of Israel, met in Alexandria, Egypt and laid the foundation for a new coalition of moderate religious leadership. (The Institute has been a major financial supporter of the Alexandria process.) Peace, of course, has yet to come to the region, but the interfaith effort succeeded in developing high-level relationships that continue to yield positive results. In one case, for example, violence was averted because of a relationship that developed during the Alexandria process between a Hebron Muslim leader and the well-known Israeli Rabbi Michael Melchior. Local anger, in Hebron, was aroused when Jewish school-boys posted anti-Muslim drawings around a neighborhood. Local Imams organized in response to the provocation and were preparing inflammatory sermons for Friday services. However, because of a personal relationship developed through the Alexandria process, the Mufti of Hebron called Melchior to prevent violence. Melchior saw an impending crisis and took his concerns straight to the top of the political structure. In response, the Israeli Prime Minister publicly disavowed the school boys' actions. But because he was secular and political, he was not trusted, and preparations in Hebron continued unabated. So, Melchior contacted Israeli Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron who travelled to Hebron an important gesture of honor and met with the Mufti. Bakshi-Doron personally assured the Mufti that not only was the boys' actions not in accordance with Judaism but the disrespect they displayed constituted a particular category of sin, a shameful act (chilul hashem). This action and explanation satisfied the Mufti, and for that moment, at least, the anger abated, and no violence ensued. Thus, even if interfaith dialogue does not lead directly to peace, it can often have positive effects"[12].

5.2-The Karuna center for peacebuilding

The Karuna Centre for Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka provided further testing of the 2012 interfaith dialogue program. Through flat and sophisticated research, they obtained a positive result according to which a growing

number of religious leaders started accepting, respecting and understanding other religions[13].

5.3-A Turkish student association at US Catholic Liberal Arts College

A Turkish student association at US Catholichas a great success in interfaith dialogue, not only dialogue but this association adopted many other methodologies to enhance interfaith harmony like dinners, lectures and trips etc. as a research paper was published aimed to conduct analysis and findings of the activities of the association. According to the findings of the researcher "All participants indicated that they felt such events were beneficial because the activities helped their educational and social development. Regardless of the type of event, all responses were positive, and all activities were found to be important as a part of extracurricular activities. The findings revealed three themes identified by the participants. The first theme was the educational knowledge of religious similarities and common history. Students reported opportunities for sharing the cultural richness and for growing from learned knowledge about the cultures of other students. Ten interviewed students indicated that they were not aware of the common roots of religions such as the commonalities between the role of Mary in the Quran and her role in the Bible. Students indicated that through this understanding, they developed tolerance and friendships with people of religions different from themselves"[14].

5.4-Face to Faith

'Face to Faith' was also an interfaith dialogue program for school children that allowed video conferencing for interfaith communications and discussions. The stated purpose was to stamp out religious and cultural divisions and thus reduce tensions between the people of different cultures and faiths. Studies showed that the program had a positive but statistically significant impact on students.[15]

5.5-Social Mercy Corps

Building Bridges to Peace 2011 Program in Uganda's Karamoja region was established to build peace in agricultural communities and farmers through a combination of economic activities and peacebuilding. The theory of the transformation plan states that building economic relations on the lines of division increases stability because people will gain economic benefits in partnership and thus place a higher value on cooperation rather than conflict. Mercy Corps used a multidisciplinary approach. The team conducted a survey of 413 families in the communities where they worked and compared the communities where they did not work. In addition, quality research was conducted using focus groups and participatory assessment strategies, such as Conflict and Resource Mapping.[16] **Conflict-affected areas in Mindanao** worked together to resolve land-related disputes. The various disputes in the targeted municipalities were successfully resolved through negotiation and dialogue. Although it took

too much time but results were positive. In 2009 NGOs were funded and strengthened in order to penetrate in society and to resolve the dispute and according to the final evaluation of the project, in some municipalities, a few cases are brought to court.[17] A costly and controversial process in which both parties can lead to poor relations, community members gain a better understanding of land rights and obligations.

World Friends of the Earth Middle East started a program called Good Water Neighbors which was aimed to acquire mutual trust in water resources as a basis for dialogue and cooperation between the people of Jordan, Palestine and Israel. The experiments sought to determine whether the Friends of the Earth Middle East activities impacted promoting awareness of water issues in participating communities and improving relations between neighboring communities, which also had a positive effect[18].

Another religious dialogue and cooperation on **climate challenges took place.** When the Paris agreement was closed in 2015, the international community agreed on climate sensitivity, though it was not considered an urgent need for action. In line with these events, a high-level meeting was held between various religious actors: "Negotiations, cooperation and action, therefore, were not only a continuous process between religious leaders and religious communities but ultimately to address environmental challenges. Working together, and negotiating with a view to mitigating climate change, became a way to promote interfaith dialogue. Since climate change can be termed as "catastrophic increase" there is reason for religious actors to work strategically on mitigation, as its rise will lead to extreme weather which could lead to social unrest among various religious communities.No doubt that there are some harms linked with interfaith dialogue due to lack of the feature mentioned earlier but according to me these can be overcome if the format of interfaith dialogues changed from "ok" towards "real meaning of the dialogue" where every representative has a chance to represent his religion, thoughts and common points with the full freedom of speech. As, interfaith dialogues and debates have always held a broad prospective to reach wide addressees and to correct the large quantity of unawareness and half-truths aligned with Islam and other religions as well, the fruits of interfaith dialogues are irrefutable.

6-Role of different trends to yield greater benefits from interfaith dialogue

6.1-Internet and social media:

There is no specific definition which can define social media perfectly because definitions develop as the technology develops, and technology and social media tools are developing day by day. Meredith Gould's definition of social media seems easy and understandable as compared to other complex definitions. According to him "social media are web-based tools for interaction that in addition to conversation, allow users to share

content such as photos videos and links to sources."[19]Oxford Dictionary defines social media as websites and applications that are used to communicate with people or to communicate with other users with similar interests.[20] With new social media, we are entering the new era which transforms the game into a multi-faceted application, allowing all types of different groups to quickly organize and share content, ideas, and software from sites around the world. One Face book page can have contributions from twelve people pointing to multiple websites and software apps. That's the real magic of communication-the beginning of realization. Like many new technologies, new social media has found its first system and the most popular in providing entertainment. However, it is already changing the way government services are made, how companies provide customers, how students learn, how non-governmental organizations do their work, how political campaigns run, and how religious organizations connect with their members.[21] In this age, when the world has become a global village because of internet, the flow of population on cyber sites increased by 73% including people of all ages. The marketing and adds on social media have made social media a vital part of people's everyday life. According to a survey done in 2019 by PEW research Centre, in most of the 11 countries surveyed, the majority of adult's report using at least one of the seven social media platforms or messaging apps included in this study. This type of online activity is most common in Lebanon, Jordan, Colombia and Mexico, where about three quarters or more use at least one of these services.[22]

6.2-Global efforts of interfaith dialogue in the digital world and its impacts

By compiling above statistics and information we can say that information technology, social media and internet are becoming a part of our everyday life and interfaith dialogue should be benefited from the social media technology. The Muslim world is giving attention towards the use of the internet and social media to enhance the benefits of intercultural and interfaith dialogue. KAICIID has recently launched programs to spread awareness and training in this regard, although there are some disadvantages linked to the interfaith dialogue on social media but the advantages are more in this digital world. 9th Doha conference of interfaith dialogue especially focused on the impact of social media on interfaith dialogue, where members of 55 countries participated and all of them were high profile religious figures. Finally, they agreed upon the point that religious leaders should have to learn and focus on learning new social media and internet skills in order to enhance the effects of interfaith dialogue.[23]Significant benefits can arise in bringing people together for an online interfaith discussion. Steve Waldman, says that "the anonymity of the Internet is what makes it work so well for religion it's that, you can explore religious matters in the privacy of your own home; ask questions

you might be embarrassed to ask face to face; have conversations with some anonymity, and do it anytime i.e., day or night. The lack of physical symbols of religiousness, such as wearing a cross necklace, a kippah, or a headscarf, requires users to look to the words of the person before they can define the practices of a particular faith. This would appear to be a disadvantage, but it could help us develop a sense of respect and an attitude of dealing with people that can hold different beliefs. Further, online dialogue requires that participants have access to a computer instead of transportation to a face to re communication, which may allow for the inclusion of persons responsible for, inter-religious exchanges. Another advantage is the multi-dimensional aspect of each tradition. They can speak about their observance and practices and show a range of adherence beyond doctrine "Surveys tend to oversimplify traditions, and ignore the many voices and lived experiences of the cumulative aspects of the tradition. It allows instant connection to others and a sense of anonymity that comes from not seeing the other person. This connection allows honesty, freedom, and the development of a common ground for discussion.[24]

The Physical impact of peacemaking contributions or dialogue cannot be undermined, no doubt physical presence and efforts for interfaith harmony bear more weight. Religion is often viewed as part of a global conflict. Many scholars have argued that a lot of disputes are driven by cultural differences, especially if it is based on religion. if one looks at the recent terrorist attacks like the New Zealand Mosque attacks 2019 by a white Christian supremacist and Charlie Hebdo shooting in January 2015 and more than 100 anti-Mosque activities in the past decade despite the fact that research is saying that "Our research findings do not point to any patterns of "Islamic radicalization" inside mosques. Instead, we find that, overwhelmingly, mosques help Muslims integrate into US society, and in fact, have a very productive role in bridging the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States. This is a finding in social science that is consistent with decades of research on other religious groups such as Jews, Protestants and Catholics, where church attendance and religiosity has been proven to result in higher civic engagement and support for the American political system."[25] Moreover the Wisconsin Sikh Temple shooting in August 2012 this kind of attacks support the fact that religion is contributing to a global war.

However, religion can be a vital resource in promoting understanding and reconciliation and can provide the basis for peace-building efforts. But unfortunately, there is very little data which is documented on religious efforts on peacemaking and a lot more research is needed on this topic. Especially the role of Islamic or Muslim community centers and Masjid in peacebuilding and interfaith dialogue is not in documented according to the required standards. Its need is much more increased when Muslim

population is the biggest minority and according to the pew research 2017 and 2019 Muslim population comprises 5% of the whole European population and expected to be doubled in next ten years[26].

This research is focusing on some main Muslim actors of interfaith dialogue and interfaith peacebuilding which include Mosques- a basic actor and some Muslim FBOs, their contribution in peacebuilding and the challenges they are facing "as much dialogue also takes place in less formal ways and lies within the practical realm of cooperation, collaboration or even the service delivery."[27]

6.3-The Ideology of Muslim FBOs and NGOs

It is understood that in Islam the ultimate goals of Islamic Shariah (laws) are to preserve life, wealth, human reason, the human race, and the dignity of all human beings. Some interpretations understand the ultimate goal as the preservation of religion itself. These goals place the responsibility of providing comprehensive and international assistance to Muslims appropriate commitments. FBOs, in fact, are considered as grey area between NGOs and religious organizations. To lay the groundwork, they incorporate charitable motives and religious commitments; they were able to conduct private-public roles with a religious motivation behind them.[28]According to Abu-Nimer "The selection of Muslim peace-building actors has been a particular challenge, because of the inseparability of Islam and other aspects of life. Islam influences all aspects of life in Muslim communities, and it is not possible to separate the religious from the non-religious. Islamic values and traditions underpin peace-building and the conflict-resolution activities of Muslims as well as all other aspects of their lives. Most of the time Muslims do not, therefore, feel the need or do not see it a necessity to emphasize the role of Islam in their work or put 'Islamic/Muslim' in the title of their work or organizations, as the presence of Islam in their work is usually assumed risky??? by their communities and Muslim peace-building actors. For that reason, it is difficult to find actors that define themselves as Muslim actors."[29] We can identify them by their motivation or inspirational force working behind them or by the initiator or the one who is leading that NGO or by means of social networking of it.In fact, Islamic religious teachings motivate Muslims for Sadaqat (charity) in many ways, for example, Zakat on rich Muslims of the society is obligatory which governments collect and use in the benefits of poor. There are many other forms of charity in Islam which are in favor of needy human beings. Moreover, these are established Islamic gifts like humanitarian assistance, education, social services for the needy and much more. These all are not only the responsibility at a personal level but also at government level so Muslim FBOs bear this motive and work accordingly that's why they can use personal, organizational and

governmental support and work more efficiently as compared to formal or secular NGOs.

6.4-Role of Masjid and Muslim community centers

From previous century, Muslims from all over the world especially European Muslims have considerably increased their struggles for interfaith dialogues because of the increasing rate of hate against Muslims and other minorities in Europe, as well as war on terror which is involving all over the world and humanity is paying the price. As according to the author of "A comparative analysis of European Islamophobia concluded that "descriptive, normative and comparative analysis of contemporary religious freedom challenges confronting Muslims in France, United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands and Sweden, with few exceptions, it found public perceptions surrounding Islam and Muslims as consistently negative. Despite laws designed to protect religious freedom from constitutional protections to anti-discrimination legislation, these measures often disappointed Muslim victims and litigants was found in practice. As a result, anti-Muslim discrimination is somewhat per-evasive in all aspects of the employment process including the increased acts and threats of violence that disproportionately impact women and is manifest in opposition to masjid construction projects. Several factors contribute to European Islamophobia, including an influx in immigration such as the so-called Syrian refugee crises that has left many Europeans fearful of terrorism and job insecurity. Still, official abuses against Muslims continue in the interest of ensuring national and global security while an apparent hatred of Muslims as a people grows."[30] On the other hand, formal and informal interfaith dialogues are continuously organizing by Muslim bodies, for example, Muslims across the UK opened their doors on Sunday as part of an annual national event aimed at building closer ties between Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

More than 250 mosques participated in the 'Visit My Mosque' event where people were welcomed and participated in activities aimed at expanding their knowledge of Islam and Muslims and the purposes of mosque. "Apart from those who continue to support hatred and sow discord in the society, Muslims in the UK have shown today that even if we continue to do the opposite by building bridges and uniting communities," said Harun Khan, secretary-general of the Islamic Council of Britain. The Kingston Muslim Association in southwest London is one of the few Muslims to open its doors to the local community and hold a variety of activities including Islamic tourism and an exhibition of Islamic art and religious literature.[31] Masajids have opened their doors for all cultures in order to promote harmony and real picture of Islam, for example??? **An-Nahdhah**, a mosque located in Harmony Center in Singapore. In the current context of confusion about Islam, the institution aims to dispel misconceptions about Muslims and non-Muslims. The mosque offers tours and has three floors

of space to display Islamic art and architecture from around the world, discovered by Islamic scholars and an understanding of Islamic religious practices. Harmony Center-the mosque also provides visitors with information on other religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism and the importance that Muslims place in the majority. Exhibitions at the mosque go a long way to dispelling myths about the role of women. Many visitors to the Mosque initially felt that women were given a lower status in Islam. However, in the An-Nahdhah Mosque, the whole place is dedicated to women and their role and their high status in Islam. There are many pictures in the exhibition that testify to the role of women in Islam. Other exhibitions highlight the golden age of the Islamic era when Muslim scientists and explorers were at the forefront of discovery. The exhibits feature prominent Muslim scientists such as Ibn Sina and Omar Khayyam. The vast amount of information from astrology to medicine distributed by Muslim scientists has surprised many visitors at the Harmony Center. Harmony Center is like a museum with its displays/exhibition, audiovisual and art objects divided into four main categories: Images of Islam, Civilizational Islam, Essence of Islam and Islamic Lifestyle. Visitors can go on a guided tour of the Center, led by trained docents who are present there to address the visitors' queries and reference resources. Although displays???exhibitions at the An-Nahdhah Mosque are limited, it has helped to promote greater understanding among the youth; Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It is the ideas of religions like these that promote and preserve the majority in Singapore.[32]

The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) is a national organization of Islamic organizations that provides a common platform for introducing Muslims, supporting Muslim communities, and developing educational, social and access programs, such as religious dialogue. The combination of interfaith activities and charitable activities has made ISNA a success in uniting Muslims at the heart of American society. ISNA objectives include providing leadership and religious training to religious leaders, conducting community programs, educating minority Muslims about religion, and expanding interfaith programs. Population statistics include many jobs and domains. The conferences ISNA organizes, provide an opportunity to listen to and network with prominent Muslim scholars and leaders and meet and share ideas with Muslims and people of other faiths.[33] ISNA has become an umbrella organization for many other American Muslim organizations and federations.

American society of Muslim advancement and Zaytuna institute: The purpose of ASMA is to build bridges with the Muslim and non-Muslim community through workshops, conferences, religious discussions and art. ASMA believes that American Muslim youth need to be empowered by faith that is tolerant, forward-thinking, and that builds a distinct American Muslim identity. On the other hand, Zaytuna Institute is an educational

institution founded to revitalize ancient Islamic legal training and Qur'anic studies in order to build a new generation of American Muslims to build upon Islamic history. The Zaytuna Institute adheres to the idea that American Muslims need to reconnect with the Islamic heritage in order to gain a complete and complete understanding of the world. The institute believes that Muslims will become enlightened citizens by engaging in and researching Islamic texts. According to the Zaytuna Institute's beliefs, one of the many ailments in American society is the disillusionment with modern-day belief in the existence, leadership, and materialism that has created so many spiritually empty lives. The institute hopes the education will improve the lives of American Muslims.[34] There are many more Muslim institutes or Islamic centers that are working significantly in Europe like the Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR), Center for the study of Islam and democracy (CSID) etc. which are not possible to discuss in single research. Much more research can be done in order to document the role of Muslim community centers in interfaith harmony.

6.5- Role of Muslim FBOs and NGOs:

and Islamic relief an international UK based Muslim humanitarian agency working for conflict resolution by giving social service to the human beings of all cultures and religions. It works in collaboration with UNHCR and other NGOs. "Islamic Relief is one of the world's largest independent Muslim NGOs, aiming to alleviate global poverty and suffering – regardless of religion, ethnicity or gender. Much of our work over the past 30 years has focused upon eradicating the structural and systemic causes of poverty. In addition to our anti-poverty work, Islamic Relief increasingly concentrates upon addressing the social and cultural drivers of poverty and suffering, such as conflict."[35] There is a lot of work done by Islamic relief worldwide (IRW) all of which can't be discussed here, and we will share some examples just in order to take a bird's eye view of this organization's mode of working. In 2013 Islamic relief worldwide collaborated with the University of Manchester's humanitarian and conflict response institute (HCRI) to hold a conference on Islam and conflict transformation. It brought together academics and practitioners to discuss conceptual and policy-oriented research and practice in the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the world.[36] It collaborated in 2014 with UNHCR in order to protect refugees which are an important humanitarian crisis worldwide,[37] in 2021 as violence continues in Tigray, Ethiopia, Islamic Relief is helping refugees flee to neighboring Sudan. Tens of thousands of people have crossed the border since November, facing dire conditions in camps that lack adequate food, clean water, shelter and toilets. At the end of December, there were more than 54,000 Ethiopian refugees in Sudan, according to the Sudanese State Security Commission (COR) and UNHCR. 45% of all refugees are children. Islamic Relief has been working closely with COR, UN agencies, and non-

governmental organizations to provide relief aid. To date, we have helped more than 3,000 families in need.[38]

> There are more than 2000 Mosques Muslim NGOs and FBOs working in Europe right now for interfaith harmony, peacebuilding and conflict resolution formally and informally. Abu Nimer[39]

discussed many faith-based Muslim NGOs and categorized them according to their different fields of work. Turkey's two largest Islamic organizations provide religious and social services that promote Islamic social, economic and cultural integration. Milli Görüş works in the public sector and the Gülen community focuses on academic and religious discussions.Keeping aside the ideological differences, many Muslims have from the thought of Fatehullah Gulen, the Gülen community is very well known for its role in interfaith dialogue and harmony with diverse cultures and societies living in Europe and worldwide. The Gülen community focuses on two types of religious activists in Europe: educational and religious dialogue. For example, the Islam and Dialogue Foundation in the Netherlands has encouraged Gülen's commitment to interfaith dialogue. They arrange meetings with Christians, Jews, and non-Christians at every level to reflect their culture, the scriptures, and the experience. They also discuss ways to solve social problems, such as religious violence, conflicts and hate on the basis of cultural differences.

7-Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is concluded that the role of social media is no doubt very important and undeniable that cannot be neglected in interfaith dialogue also, but the physical role of mosques, Muslim NGOs and FBOs is bearing comparatively more importance because social welfare and face to face meetings, education, social work against discrimination and poverty bears more weight and contributes more in human welfare and interfaith harmony. It is the need of the modern age that governments should take a further step and support digital forms of interfaith dialogue by linking it with Masajid administrations and FBOs to yield maximum benefits from both actors of interfaith dialogue and harmony. This initiative will benefit in this spectrum also which is considered a drawback of social media that was discussed previously. Sometimes, on social media, common people indulge in arguments or fight which usually happened because of the lack of knowledge or education about other religions and protocols of interfaith dialogue, as a result the discussions lead to the conflict rather than harmony. Through proper training and support, helping Mosques with special social media channels, the interfaith process will be handed over to the field specialized personals, and ultimately, the benefits will be enhanced.

References

[1] Special issue: Christian Self-Understanding in the Context of Islam Current Dialogue, no. 52, WCC Journal, July 2012, p: 2

[2] Muhammad Shafiq & Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Interfaith Dialogue, International Institute of Islamic thought, Herndon, 2007, p: 12

[3] Wendy Doniger, On Hinduism, Oxford university press, 2014. p: 96

[4] Melvin Small, William D. Hoover, Charles De Benedetti, Give Peace a Chance, Syracuse University Press, 1992, p:156

[5] Amos Shapira, Mala Tabory, New political entities in public and private international law, Kluwer Law International publishers, 1999, p:267

[6] Melvin Small, William D. Hoover, Charles De Benedetti, Give Peace a Chance, Syracuse University Press, 1992, p:156

[7] Muhammad Shafiq & Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Interfaith dialogue, p:10

[8] Ibid

[9] Abu Asiya, Dawud, Some Evils of Interfaith Dialogues, Spiritual Fortress.com, 2006

[10] Op cit

[11] The Quran 109:6, Translated by Abdullah Yousuf Ali.

[12] What works? Evaluating interfaith dialogue programes, special report 123: July 2004, United states institute of peace

[13] Year book of international organizations,2013-2014, Union of international associations, Brill Academic Publishing,2013, vol 1 p:1724

[14] Ercan Acar,   Effects of interfaith dialog activities: The role of a Turkish Student Association at an East Coast U.S. University, vol.8, 23 July 2013, Marywood University, Scranton, PA, USA.

[15] Roger Austin, Bill Hunter, Online learning and community cohesion: linking schools, p: 74, Routledge, New York 2013

[16] Mercy corps, Uganda case study report, 2011, mercycorps.org.

[17] Land disputes in conflict affected areas of Mindanao: report of the joint world bank-international organization for migration scoping mission, May 2013

[18] Fracois Guerquin, World Water Actions: Making water flow for all, 2010, p:44 Routledge

[19] Meredith Gould, The Social media Gospel: sharing the good news in good days, p.3, Liturgical press, Collegeville Minnesota, 2013

[20] The Oxford Dictionary, 2011

[21] 2010 Undergraduate Fellows Report Bridging Babel: New Social Media and Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding, Barkley center for religion peace and world affairs, 2010, p:7

[22] https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2019/03/07/use-of-smartphones-and-social-media-is-common-across-most-emerging-economies/#table

[23] http://qatarconferences.org/interfaith2011/speech_two.php

[24]https://moodle.kaiciid.org/pluginfile.php/8103/mod_page/content/5/Module%207-Texte%20anglais-RBD.pdf

[25]Mosques as American Institutions: Mosque Attendance, Religiosity and Integration into the Political System among America, Kassra A.R. Oskooii, Matt A. Barreto, Kassra A. R. Oskooii , Harvard University, Center for American Political Studies, Department of Government, 1737 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA, University of Washington, Department of Political Science, Gowen Hall 101, Box 353530, Seattle, WA 98195, USA, *Religions* 2011, *2*(4), 504-524;https://doi.org/10.3390/rel2040504
https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/2/4/504/htm

[26]https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/29/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/

[27] Dynamics of religion, edited by Christoph Bochinger, Jorg Rupke, published by Walter de gruyter GmBH, Berlin, 2017, p :537

[28] Politics and Religion , Volume 8 , Issue 2 , June 2015 , p. 236 - 262
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048315000267]
Copyright © Religion and Politics Section of the American Political Science Association 2015

[29] S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana, Muhammad Abu Nimer, Faith Based Peace Building, Mapping and Analysis of Christian,Muslim and Multifaith Actors, November 2005, Published by Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Salam Institute of Peace and Justice, p:16

[30] UCLA Journal of Islamic and Near Eastern Law Title A Comparative Analysis of European Islamophobia: France, UK, Germany, Netherlands, and SwedenPermalinkhttps://escholarship.org/uc/item/870099f4JournalJournal of Islamic and Near Eastern Law, 16(1) Author Abdelkader, EngyPublication Date2017

[31] https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/uk-mosques-open-their-doors-to-public/1408235

[32] An-Nahdhah Mosque, Zulkifly Maidin Natasha Lakhpathy | 13 November 2007 | Global, The Harmony Centre, An-Nahdhah Mosque, https://the.ismaili/our-culture/harmony-nahdhah-mosque

[33] Yushau sodiq, An Insider's Guide to Islam, pg: 486, Trafford publishing, USA, 2011

[34] Qamar ul huda, The Diversity of Muslims in the United States: Views as Americans, Volume 31, p: 7, united states institute of peace, special report, 2006

[35] Lucy V. Salek, working in conflict: a faith-based tool kit, 2014 Published by www.islamicrelief.org

[36] Islam and conflict transformation, Lucy V. Moore, Tim Jacoby, pages 27: 275-279, 24 Jun 2015, Published online:25 Aug 2015, Peace Review: A journal of social justice. ISSN: 1040-2659 doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2015.1063367 copy right Tylor and Francis group, LLC

[37] https://www.islamic-relief.org/role-of-faith-in-refugee-protection/

[38] https://www.islamic-relief.org/islamic-relief-continues-to-support-tens-of-thousands-fleeing-violence-in-ethiopia/

[39]Tsjeard Bouta S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Faith-Based Peace-Building: Mapping and Analysis of Christian, Muslim and Multi-Faith Actors, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' in cooperation with Salam Institute for Peace and Justice, Washington DC November 2005, Desk Top Publishing: Carola van der Heiden Netherlands Institute of International Relations,Clingendael.