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## **Hadith-Based Ethical Guidelines for Muslims in Non-Muslim Societies**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article looks at the ethical Hadith derived guidelines to help Muslims staying in non Muslim societies regarding how they should maintain their religious identities while trying to live in peace and integration. The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) provide a sociological model for social behavior, religious tolerance, political engagement and economic ethics which provide Muslims with a moral compass in multicultural environments. Nevertheless, Muslims living in non Muslim society are subjected to enormous problems such as cultural disparities, legal conflict, social pressure and generational barrier. As there are cultural norms which may not align with Islamic teachings, legal systems that do not accommodate religious practice and the general Islamophobia, Muslims attempting to balance being Muslim with the societal expectations present unique obstacles. Furthermore, generational differences in the way in which the Islamic teachings are interpreted and applied make integration more complicated. While these challenges exist, Muslim leaders and scholars are very important to help guide communities through these issues without losing sight of their faith. Educational programs and interfaith dialogue initiatives such as these are the key to bridging gaps between Muslims and non Muslims. If Muslims stick to the Islamic ethical principles of justice, honesty and compassion, they can make positive contributions to their host societies, while maintaining their religious identity. The purpose of this article is to show the need for ethical behavior, community participation, and dialogue in creating a harmonious multicultural community. In the end, the Muslim experience in non Muslim societies shows us the necessity of adaptation, resilience, as well as an ethics attached to them, a global world that can accommodate faith and integration.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic ethics, Hadith, non-Muslim societies, religious identity, cultural differences, legal conflicts, social pressure, generational divide, interfaith dialogue, Muslim integration, ethical conduct, multiculturalism, Islamophobia, community engagement.*



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### **Introduction**

Islam is a comprehensive way of life that provides a strong ethical framework that helps Muslims live successfully in the different institutions of life, a fact that is confirmed by the fact that this Ethic is applicable to the non-Muslim societies. The Hadith – teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) – contain extremely valuable teachings on how Muslims should live alongside people of different faiths, whether in a social or cultural environment. In today's globalized world, Muslims are no longer minorities in the majority of the countries they reside, and therefore it is important to follow the ethical principles of Islam as long as it is done in an acceptable manner. Scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1999) highlights Islamic ethics that are universal and adaptable and encourages Muslims to uphold their religious identity while being part of a non Muslim society. Historically, Prophet's interaction with Jewish and Christian communities in Medina also offers a model of ethical engagement in which the principles of justice, fairness and respect for others are observed. The relevance of these principles for Muslims moving in the modern multicultural societies is still valid today. The settlers of Muslims in non-Muslim societies present different problems, with the problem of religious identity, social integration, and legal compliance. Muslims in the West face dual challenge of preserving faith while making effective contribution to the societies they live in, often with little support from their own Muslim communities (Tariq Ramadan 2004). The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stress the need for justice, tolerance and peaceful coexistence among each other as a means of creating harmony and good conducts in different environments. For example, Islamic ethical teachings regularly emphasize the covenant fulfillments and treatment of non-Muslims fairly and favorably. These teachings serve as a moral compass for Muslims, guiding them on how to dealculturally, legally, and socially with conflict. Adherence to these principles allows the Muslims to implement Islamic ethics on universal parameters and make a positive contribution to their host societies. Though Islamic teachings clearly provide various ethical guidelines, Muslims who live in non-Muslim societies have to struggle with a number of practical challenges, such as cultural difference, legal conflict and social pressure. John Esposito (2011) remarks on how Muslim integration into Western societies often involves balancing faith obligations with rules and norms in the local society. Alternatively, within families of Muslims it is even more complicated as there are often generational divides in how younger and older generations interpret and apply Islamic teachings. To tackle these challenges, Muslim leaders and scholars are an indispensable aspect playing a vital role by providing the right guidance and promoting interfaith dialogue. According to Jane Smith (2002), programs to encourage the understanding and cooperation among Muslims and non-Muslims could ease the gap and create harmonious multicultural community. Muslim compliance with the ethical principles derived from teachings of Islam will keep them to be pious and help them remain the plural of their host societies by being part of their social, political and economic fabric and they will be the true spirit of Islam.

### **Social Behavior and Interaction**

In non-Muslim societies, Muslims are encouraged to exhibit exemplary social behavior that reflects the ethical teachings of Islam. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the importance of good character and kindness in interactions with others, regardless of their



faith. As Abdullah Yusuf Ali (2001) notes in his commentary on the Quran, the concept of *Ihsan* (excellence in conduct) is central to Islamic ethics, urging Muslims to treat others with compassion and fairness. This principle is particularly relevant in multicultural societies, where Muslims are often seen as representatives of their faith. By embodying virtues such as honesty, humility, and generosity, Muslims can foster positive relationships and dispel misconceptions about Islam. For example, the Prophet's states:

"خيركم أحاسنكم أخلاقاً"

"The best of you are those with the best character."

This Hadith in Sahih al Bukhari which stresses the significance of good character, moral excellence in Islam. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) believed that the ethical behavior was the most important factor and he considered the quality of one's character as a measure of excellence. In non-Muslim societies, Muslims are ordinarily regarded as a spokesperson of their faith and thus this teaching is especially pertinent. Muslims can spread religious teachings through embodiment of virtues like honesty, kindness and humility, and this can influence their communities on a positive note and show the beauty of Islamic ethics. This hadith reminds one that true excellence is not in wealth or status, but in how one treats others and upholds moral integrity in his daily dealings.

Another key aspect of social behavior in Islam is the emphasis on maintaining good relations with neighbors, regardless of their religious background. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said,

"من كان يؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر فليحسن إلى جاره"

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him be good to his neighbor." This Hadith sitting in Sahih Muslim mentions the principle of Kindness, showing respect towards neighbors and people in general irrespective of their religion is an Islamic practice. The believing Neighbors, for example, need to be treated with compassion and used considerately which applies to regard recognizing Allah and the Day of Judgement. This teaching, in non-muslim societies, guides a Muslim to interact and integrate socially while actively fostering positive relationships with the society and participate in constructive activities for the betterment of the environment. Muslims are likely to have or develop feelings or senses of unity and respect with and within Islam which is caring and protective. In Reza Aslan's words (2005), "the Prophet's orientation to compassion toward fellow human beings," demonstrates the Islamic position that we all live together in a single community and must strive towards togetherness. If implemented singularly in a non-Muslim society, this will motivate a Muslim to become socially active, engage in social programs and contribute toward the wellbeing of a community. The cited actions are proof that Islam is embracing and merciful.

Furthermore, Islam encourages Muslims to engage in dialogue and build bridges of understanding with people of other faiths. The Quran explicitly states,

"ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ۗ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ صَلَّى عَن سَبِيلِهِ ۗ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ"



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"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided."

This verse emphasizes the importance of inviting others to Islam with wisdom, kindness, and respectful dialogue. It encourages Muslims to communicate their faith in a manner that is gentle, thoughtful, and considerate, reflecting the compassionate and inclusive nature of Islamic teachings. The verse also reminds believers that ultimate guidance lies with Allah, reinforcing the need for humility and patience in da'wah (invitation to Islam). This verse, as interpreted by Karen Armstrong (2006), emphasizes the importance of respectful and constructive communication in interfaith interactions. In non-Muslim societies, Muslims are encouraged to participate in interfaith initiatives, share their beliefs with clarity and respect, and listen to the perspectives of others. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself set an example of engaging in dialogue with people of different faiths, as seen in his interactions with the Christian delegation from Najran. By following this model, Muslims can contribute to a culture of mutual respect and understanding, which is essential for peaceful coexistence in diverse societies.

#### **Religious Identity and Tolerance**

In non-Muslim societies, maintaining religious identity while practicing tolerance is a central aspect of Islamic teachings. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) demonstrated this balance through his interactions with people of different faiths, such as the Christians of Najran and the Jewish community in Medina. A key Hadith that encapsulates this principle is:

"من كان يؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر فليقل خيراً أو ليصمت"

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith 6475). This Hadith encourages Muslims to uphold their religious identity by speaking words that reflect goodness and wisdom, while avoiding speech that could harm or offend others. In multicultural societies, this teaching guides Muslims to express their faith positively and respectfully, fostering an environment of mutual understanding and coexistence. By adhering to this principle, Muslims can maintain their religious identity without compromising their commitment to peaceful and respectful interactions with others. Tolerance in the Islam is not about coexistence only, but also about respecting the other's dignity and right. Diversity of faith was one of Allah's divine plan, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught, and his actions showed that consistently. The Hadith above clearly states that good speech and moderation are required because tolerance is important. Practicing tolerance will show that Islam is not a religion of intolerance, but a religion of peace and respect of human dignity. Not only does this help build their own religious identity, but it also works to dispel any misconceptions about Islam, especially in a society in which Muslims are a minority. The Prophet used his example of how Muslims should be fair and respectful to non-Muslims in a diverse society as a model to Muslims today. Furthermore, this concept of tolerance in Islam includes active engagement in building societies of harmonious relationships with the people of other faiths. Nevertheless, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) drew up treaties and agreements with the non Muslim communities and their rights and freedoms were guaranteed. The Hadith of the good or what to say and to remain silent is a reminder to one to be tolerant and not to be passive to deal with someone in good manner and avoid



conflict. This means getting involved in interfaith dialogues, supporting the efforts of these social harmony initiatives and campaigning against discrimination and injustice in non Muslim societies. If Muslims follow these, they will uphold the religious identity of Islam and exhibit the true spirit of Islam, that of tolerance and mutual respect.

### **Political and Civic Engagement**

In non-Muslim societies, political and civic engagement is an important aspect of a Muslim's responsibility to contribute positively to the community. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) set an example of active participation in societal affairs, even when living among diverse groups. A key Hadith that highlights the importance of fulfilling responsibilities is:

"كلكم راعٍ وكلكم مسؤول عن رعيته"

"Every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith 7138). This Hadith brings to light that Muslims are obligated to participate in the welfare of the society they live in, by political participation, or serving the community, or taking part in the civic space. Engaging in these things allows Muslims to perform their Islamic 'duties' and show their responsibility to the common good.

Civic engagement is a concept of justice and public welfare in Islam. The Prophet (PBUH) taught that justice and fairness should exist substantially in all spheres of life, and that includes in governance, public matters, and so forth. The leadership and responsibility mentioned above is not for rulers only but for whoever is in his position. In a non-Muslim society, it means that Muslims are encouraged to participate in democratic processes voting, supporting just policies, supporting anything that will help the society at large. This will go a long way in helping Muslims create a more equitable and inclusive society with the alignment of their civic duties with Islamic values of justice and compassion.

Moreover, it offers Muslims the opportunity to be positive representations of their faith, and rejects negative stereotypes. Treaties and alliances with non Muslim communities were the part of the governance by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which showcases that cooperation and respect towards each other is significant. The Hadith about responsibility also suggest that Muslims should not be indifferent to what their surroundings look like and try to do what they can, however small, to improve them; whether through public service, advocacy, or anything along those lines. Participating in political and civic life will enable Muslims to construct bridges of understanding, to promote social justice, and to live by the Islamic principles of fairness and responsibility. This active engagement not only serves the interests of society but also enhances the Muslim community's vocation of a positive and valued role in the wider social fabric.

### **Economic Behavior and Business Ethics**

In non-Muslim societies, Muslims are called to uphold the highest standards of economic behavior and business ethics, as outlined in Islamic teachings. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized honesty, fairness, and transparency in all financial dealings. A key Hadith that highlights the importance of ethical business conduct is:

"التاجر الصدوق الأمين مع النبيين والصديقين والشهداء"

"The honest and trustworthy merchant will be with the prophets, the truthful, and the martyrs" (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith 1209). This Hadith underscores the value Islam places on





integrity in business transactions. By adhering to these principles, Muslims can build trust with their clients and partners, regardless of their religious or cultural background, and contribute to a fair and just economic system. As Muhammad Akram Khan (2013) notes the ethical framework of Islam provides a comprehensive guide for conducting business in a manner that aligns with both religious values and modern economic practices. This approach ensures that Muslims can thrive economically while remaining true to their faith.

The Islamic teachings also encourage the avoidance of exploitation and fair dealings in the course of every economic activity. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) warned against practice like fraud, hoarding and usury (interest) which harms people and society. The above mentioned Hadith reminds us that to conduct business ethically is a personal issue and a means to earn divine reward as well. This means that Muslims must transact their businesses so as to be in accordance with social welfare in non Muslim societies, such as fair pricing, ethical sourcing and charitable giving. In the context of Islamic economic ethics, as discussed by Rafik Issa Beekun (1997), Islamic economic ethics are based on the prohibition of riba (interest) and the implication of equitable distribution of wealth. If Muslims adhere to these principles, they can contribute Justice and compassion in the economic situation as it will be a trust and cooperate in different societies.

Furthermore, the Islamic economic principles urge Muslims to foster the benefit and the wellbeing of the society by means of acts of charity and social responsibility. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encouraged us that Allah's wealth is a trust; it is from Him and so we are to use it to benefit others. The Hadith regarding the honest merchant shows that economic success is not an end goal, but a means to fulfill Allah's and society's dawahs. This can happen in non Muslim societies in many ways such as supporting local businesses, creating jobs opportunities, and donating to charitable causes. According to Monzer Kahf (2005), the concept of zakat (obligatory charity) and sadaqah (voluntary charity) has a strong role in concerns with the social justice and economic disparities. Muslims can create a positive influence in the world and create what is better, more equitable and more compassionate economic system by putting these ethical principles into economic behavior.

#### **Challenges and Practical Considerations**

The conflict between cultural rules and Islamic rules may arise between Muslims who live in other cultures. An example is the practices of drinking, casual dating or certain forms of entertainments in the majority of Western societies, that are socially accepted but do not correspond to Islamic values. It is a tension they would like to balance to keep up their Muslim religious identity while integrating into the host communities as well. For younger Muslims, this causes them to be pushed in between their religious obligations and the pressure to be accepted by their peers. Secondly, cultural differences can be seen in the working environment in which there are obstacles for practicing Muslims to dress, socialize and eat. For these problems, the common way Muslim communities address these problems is through cultural education programmes which provide ways on how people can tread the fine line between their religion and the cultural expectations of their particular society. The programs focus on how certain Islamic principles should be adhered to and how to have mutual respect and understanding with non Muslims. Muslims can solve these differences



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through dialogue and awareness of cultural differences without compromising religious values.

Another big problem for Muslims in non-Muslim societies is balancing religious duties with the local laws. There can be cases where the Islamic practices and the legal systems are in conflict; for instance, a law pertaining to the religious attires, the halal slaughter or some Islamic holidays. For example, the facial confrontation bans in some European nations have given the Muslim women wearing the niqab dilemma. Likewise, prayer times or religious holidays that are not accommodated by difficult workplace policies can be burdensome for Muslims to fulfill their spiritual duties. In fact, many of these legal conflicts require Muslims to be clever and skilful in thinking of ways to solve their problems, be it by changing the policy or finding other ways of practicing their religion. Legal scholars and community leaders help to provide guidance for how to overcome these challenges in a way that's still compliant with local laws. There are situations when it may be necessary for Muslims to choose between honoring their faith and conforming to legal regulations, which makes it important for legal systems to broaden their understanding and accommodate towards Muslims.

There is an almost pervasive problem of Muslims being subjected to social pressure in the form of negative stereotypes, Islamophobia and more. Prejudice, discrimination and hate crimes are usually the result of Islam and the Muslims being misunderstood. They could be socially excluded, discriminated against at work and / or harassed because they are identified as Muslims. For the young Muslims it is very difficult to feel a sense of belonging in societies where they are seen as 'the other' and under these pressures. They also help to add to creating a hostile environment for so many Muslims in terms of Muslims and media portrayals of Islam as extremist. Muslim communities have in recent years taken up public education campaigns, staged interfaith dialogues and employed media outreach in order to debunk myths and tell a more accurate picture of Islam. Building bridges with non-Muslims and building good relationships with them can help Muslims thwart negative stereotypes and a more inclusive society. These efforts not only help Muslims but is a step for the larger cause of social brotherhood and mutual respect.

Also, there is a generational divide in the Muslim communities, which renders the problem even more complicated in non-Muslim societies. A lot of older generations follows what we call as traditional interpretation of Islamic teachings whereas a lot of the younger Muslims want to reinterpret Islamic teachings to fit modern life. This kind of a divide in the family and community leads to family and community conflicting about gender roles, marriage, and its integration into the Western culture as the family and community start having different views about them. Muslim between the age of 20-40 might be alienated from the practices and values of the generation before them and integrated in the mainstream culture. However, older Muslims may be concerned about the eroding of the religious identity of the youth. To this divide, Muslim leaders and scholars have stressed the need for open communication and mutual understanding between generations. Through educational initiatives that present a balanced Islamic teachings, which simultaneously beneficiate traditional values and contemporary realities, this gap can be bridged. The generational divide is best navigated by Muslim communities by promoting unity and a sense of purpose, while maintaining a sense of identity with their religion and cultural heritage.



### **Conclusion**

Muslims in non Muslim societies face challenges of cultural differences and legal conflicts, social pressure and generational divides that showed the complexity of religious identity while they join to diverse social and legal framework. However, the ethical guidelines which are derived from the teachings of Islam constitute a strong base to face these issues gracefully and fatefully. Muslims are being called to the Islam of justice, tolerance and compassion that can truly be the spirit of Islam, a way to live and a way to take positive action in the societies that host Muslims. It is crucial for Muslim leaders, scholars and community organizations to play the role of guiding and supporting individuals and families in the process of living as minorities in non Muslim societies. Through advocacy, dialogue, and educational programs, Muslims bridge gaps of understanding and foster mutual respect, addressing misconceptions about Islam.

As the case with many challenges, Muslims can consider issues in non-Muslim societies as trying opportunities for intra-community dialogue and collaborational growth. Muslims are able to navigate challenges within metropolitan environments alongside their communities and use them to redefine the perception of Islam around the world. The cultivation of peace and understanding begins by Muslims embracing their role as victor of faiths and gently advocating what their beliefs and culture actually represent. Clauses of economic, social, and political embrace of devoided identity can coexist alongside practicing honesty, fairness, and social responsibility leading to the preservation of religiousness. Alongside the preservation of identity free within their rivals' secular demography, observing deeply integrated life holds balance with faith.





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