

# **Continuing the study of Islamic Civilization is imperative as it incorporates the functionalist confluences between different faiths and belief systems in Malaysia**

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## *Abstract:*

*The rationale of maintaining the Study of Islamic Civilization or TITAS is due to the consideration of integrating a society, which is committed to the mutual understanding of different belief systems in view of living harmoniously. This paper posits the Functionalist proposition of the Islamic religion as an axis since it is the official religion of the Malaysian state and the points of confluences with other belief systems in Malaysia such as Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Confucism, Taoism and that holds to the similar 'functionalist' ideologies such as human rights, heritage, harmony, safety and unity while considering universal moral values such as: good faith, being considerate, virtuous, honest, diligent, cooperative and high sense of community living especially in managing conflict of opinions. This paper proposes a few areas of emphasis to be taken into consideration when teaching this subject to further strengthen the function of Islam in teaching TITAS.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

The study of Islamic Civilization and Asian Civilization is a compulsory course for all private and public institutions in Malaysia. Previously divided into two sections, it is now unified and offered as one course. The author believes that this course should be continued and improved. This paper attempts to argue for the prolongation of the course.

Islamic civilization has direct connection with Islam as a religion and its values. Referring to multiple religious definitions that were posited by various intellectuals,<sup>4</sup> it can be succinctly viewed from two perspectives; i) substantive;

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<sup>4</sup> Wilfred C. Smith (1962) states that it is impossible to provide a definitive definition for the meaning of religion. Religion or *religie* (Dutch) derives from the Latin word *religios* or *religare* (Latin) that connotes, to be entwined in solidarity in its original Latin context. Meaning, religion is something that glues agency with society in understanding their physical surroundings and existence, and its metaphysical interpretations provides meaning to that 'supernatural' being that the agency needs to provide reverence to (Smith 1963:351). Religion can be interpreted as a form of relationship between the agency and a supreme being for protection uncontrollable circumstances. This sacred relationship between the agency and the supreme being brings about a sense respect between the agency people at large, while seeking solace and belief in their respective religions. E.B. Taylor (1903) argues that religion is the belief of something extraordinary. Durkheim (1915:47) on the other hand argues that religion is a belief system and acts of solidarity relating to the 'sacred'. The anthropological perspective of religion is that it is a set of rules that regulates people

and ii) functional. The former views religion from the perspective of its form and practices. The latter on the other hand views it from the functions of its existence. The perspectives that is incorporated in this paper has predominantly taken into account the viewpoints of scholars that have contributed to the newly minted ethnic relations book by KITA, UKM<sup>5</sup>.

## **2.0 Introduction to functionalism and religious life**

Terminologically, the root word for functionalism is 'function' and its meaning is rather obvious. Whereas in the context theoretical development, Parsons (1975) was one of the earliest contributors to this theory. The structural theorists imagines the agency as agents that are incentive driven which can be controlled through discipline and punishment. In this sense, people are preoccupied with their individualistic pursuits, but what ties communities into one similar structure besides the bourgeoisie and proletariat division is when they share similar values for the promotion of peace and stability within these communities. A more detailed explanation of the individualistic incentives from the functionalist perspective will be discussed in the later sections.

A religious life involves the individual, community or grouping that revolves the norms of a particular religion. This phenomenon occurs when the five measures of having belief or having a particular theological understanding, have certain rituals that followers subscribe to, have certain knowledge on the knowledge and a certain level of commitment is required to the religion. For an example, from the religious perspective, the learned are more revered compared to ordinary followers. This is because they have devoted their lives to God, while ordinary people are 'followers' of that particular religion (Dr. Ismail).

## **3.0 Religious Functionalism as a Determinant of Cultural Civilization**

Embedded with the existence of religion are its functions, and most historians agree that it is a basic human right to practice religion freely. It is because that, that most individuals adhere to some form of religion or belief system. Most contemporary and primitive human beings have some form of religion or belief system that they believe in. Religious thoughts are existent in human beings since birth. Archeological evidence suggests that early human existence prove that they was some form of religious practice.

Besides natural instincts, human beings have some form of religious belief due to natural cultural inheritance, peace and safety, to strengthen relationships with other people, the need to seek answers during times of tribulations that cannot be scientifically explained.

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with the spiritual world, specifically God. Religion also refers to a system that provides confidence to the society or those who are followers of that particular religion by that specific community to understand and to response to a specific situation that is unexplainable scientifically which is considered spiritual, those pertinent to God or negative spirits. Among the religions and belief systems which are widely practiced globally is Islam, Christianity, Buddhisme, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Judaism, Shinto, Bahaism and Zoroastrism. Besides that, belief systems practiced by minority primitive communities that live in segregation from the world at large that has developed without restriction and historical constraints include pre-animism, animism, fetishism, shamanism and totemism.

Heritage remains one the main factors for one to embrace a particular religion. In usual circumstances individuals embrace a particular religion that were already embraced by their families, tribe or ethnic grouping that was inherited from one generation to another. For an instance, most ethnic Malays are Muslims because of their families or ancestral heritage.

Safety is also a factor that plays an important role for an individual to embrace a particular religion because it is believed to provide an overarching supernatural power over an individual's safety. This supernatural source of power provides an avenue to express ones grief while offering succor and refuge during difficult times.

The peace factor till the end of ones life is an important that brings people closer to religion as most religions promises peace to their followers if followed devotedly.

Other factors that draw people into a particular include the unexplainable events that take place in ones life. Questions about the self, the environment and mystical world cannot be explained scientifically, which could explain from a religious perspective. Thus, religion is an avenue to explain the questions that cannot be rationally justified.

Religion remains sort after because it is an element that strengthens ties. According to Durkheim (1915) a common belief systems and practices that go along with religion brings people together and helps the community to live a more morale life. From a functionalist perspective, religion also functions at a personal as followers of a particular are assured a more peaceful life. It provides further courage in handling times of uncertainty, by providing perseverance in times of turbulence, assurance at times of inconvenience and ease of burden during tribulations. Religion also increases self-esteem at times of defeat, humility when victorious and sensitivity toward the inner soul.

Therefor, the functionalist view of religion that it includes basic morals, art, culture, literature and social life. It helps generate a sovereign civilized race and the existence of the civilization itself and the direction it embarks on.

#### **4.0 Rationality of Islamic Civilization Studies as a Compass for Functionalism in Understanding Religious Unity**

The rationalization of continuation of Islamic Civilization has to be observed on the notion that its functional similarities among other belief systems and the values it promotes. Why Islam? This is because Islam is the official religion of the Federation and the main socio-cultural denominator in the country. The Federal Constitution also states that the 'raja-raja' Melayu is the heads of the religion in the country.

It is obvious that most Muslim Malaysians accept this fact without much objection. However, the writer would like to draw upon the attention of the non-Muslim population of the country to the fact that Islam also has a functionalist composition that would attract most human beings. The later writings would stipulate the functionalist composition that is shared by other religions and belief systems.

#### 4.1 Islam Promotes Peace and peace efforts is the aspiration of most belief systems

Allah s.w.t mentions

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّنَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ  
وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ  
وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَ تَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا  
بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ  
وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢١٣﴾

(al Baqarah2:213)

meaning:

“At the beginning human beings were one in belief (according to religion Allah was ONE, but when they started infighting), then Allah decreed to his disciples that were his messengers of good news (to all those pious people the reward is Heaven, and the messengers of bad news)(to those that disobeys, you will be rewarded with hell); and Allah handed down through the Prophets the Holy Books that (containing explanations that) were truth, to execute their dealings with their fellow human beings on their squabbles and (in essence) not to have conflicts among those that have been bestowed with the Holy Books, that is for those whom have already being bestowed with a clear message – then those whom are still rebellious are in essence doing it out of jealousy. Hence, Allah has sent a clear message to pious people to seek the truth instead of joining the rebellious (the betrayers), with HIS consent. And Allah will always sent his ‘Signs’ to those that seeks it toward the right direction (according to HIS laws)”.

It is apparent that Allah SWT decrees that human beings are off one Race. Diversity (akidah) is choice, however, the pursuit of Allah’s love allows for his message to be bestowed upon to those who seek it. Islam acknowledges that non-Muslims that live in a country with them on the basis of plurality. *Ahli zimmah* (peace through treaties @ assurance of peace) is assured nationality similar to the ones of Muslim constituents. The rights and responsibilities should be adhered and respected by each and every member of the society. The occurrence of the human form, which is multiethnic and multiracial by composition, is to be appreciated, even more so. Allah SWT decrees:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ  
لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْفُسُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

(Surah al-Hujurat 49: 13)

Meaning:

“Dear human race! As We have created you men and women, and WE have made you multiracial and tribal, is so that you can understand one another (and be acquainted to one another). The more pious you are next to Allah is a person that fears Allah (not especially that of an aristocratic lineage or a special chosen race), as Allah’s knowledge is very Wide and Deep.

Islam is for everybody, transcending race and ethnic cleavages. Diversity is not impediment. Plurality promotes human beings to know each other and do charity for each other. Plurality for the Madinah community is bonded upon a set of laws; “Madinah Charter” was a social contract between the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. with the people of Madinah (Muslims, Jews and Christians that are diverse in beliefs).

Ibn Khaldun (*al-Muqaddimah*) states ‘asabiyah: it is a resurrecting factor if one holds to the concept of unity and a decaying factor if a civilization holds on to chauvinism and racism. *Abasiyah*’s concept of unity stresses on brotherhood, friendship and helping each that is similar to the core principles of Islam. It also does not conflict with the notion of Unity in Diversity<sup>6</sup>, which is an overall religion that is able to promote unity among human beings.

The **Taoist** (Tao Chia) religion believes that the multiple ‘God’s’ is a manifestation of Tao that is mentioned through meditation and illustrated through various statues. Chung Tzu says

“Human beings are in intelligent. And it is seen here, all are in darkness. It can be heard as pure silence.

“In that silence light is observed. And in that silence is harmony” (Surah al-Hujurat 49: 13)

**Confucianism:** Confucius sees the importance of education for the development of intellectuals and nobles (junzi). The role of the nobles is to educate themselves with knowledge and to improve themselves in order to lead the general population. The role of the Shi (intellectuals or soon to be nobles) is to provide assistance to the nobles and involve themselves in teaching and other works. During that learning process there are four principles that are emphasized in Confucianism, which are, to listen, to observant, to ask lots of questions and to understand more. Confucius stresses on honesty when learning. He stresses in Lun Yu; “If known, say know, if do not know, say do not know, that is knowledge” (Dr. Ubaidullah Mohd Nasir, 2000). He also emphasized that his disciples not to make four errors, which are, not to make false presumptions, do not be too ascertain, not to be too rigid and not to be egoistic (Dr. Ubaidullah Mohd Nasir, 2000). Conscious stresses the consolidation between learning and thinking, he says:

“Learning without thinking is fallow, thinking without learning can be perilous” (Lun Yu). “Abstinance from food, spending the whole night thinking instead of sleeping, is not worthwhile, instead its better to spend that time learning” (Lun Yu).

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<sup>6</sup> A concept that is advocated by Prof. Emeritus Dato’ Dr. Shamsul Amri Baharudin, Director of Institute of Ethnic Research Malaysia (KITA).

The consistency between Confucianism with Islam is stated by Prof. Tu Weiming (1997) on the idea of a government that treats good and treats its citizens fairly based on morals that is shared by the leaders and citizens. They also share the idea that there is difference between human and other beings of this world and share a similar point of view on the distribution of wealth, leadership and equality. Dr. Ubaidullah Mohd Nasir (2000) concludes that Islam shares similar ethical thoughts with Confucianism on aspects such as education, leadership, social relations, love and life that is culturally based (Osman Bakar, 1997).

**The main Buddhist sects, Hinayana (Theravada grouping) and Mahaya:** The Buddhist religion does not disregard other religion out criticize it deviant belief systems. Buddhist acknowledges the various belief systems in this world, and differentiates them by stating that some are easier to understand compared to others, not to differentiate them by stating that one is good or bad. The Buddhist faith that is highly moral and 'faithless' did pose any harm to the Hindu faith followers and their Gods. Therefore, many Hindus follow Buddha's teachings but are still faithful to Hindu Gods. This was the resonance how the Buddhist religion was incorporated into the Hindu faith.

#### 4.2 Adoration for peace

All religion has a love for peace. Islam adores peace and friendship among fellow human beings irrespective of differences in belief systems.

**Buddha;** In 563 BC, Buddha through its founder Siddharta Gautama Buddha<sup>7</sup> presented a theme that stressed on compassion to all beings. Buddha was shining wise person that was free from sin, and his name Gautama meant pastor, which described his personality. Buddhist's "Four Noble Truths" about this universe is: Suffering is universal (dukkha), there is a source to all kinds of suffering (dukkha samudaya), one can overcome suffering (dukkha nirodha), there is means to overcome suffering (dukkha nirodha marga).

All sufferings have a source. Buddha mentions as an empirical wheel that has 12 channels, which are: negligence (avidya), tendencies (samskara), realization of the powers of karma (v~nana), name and object (name of object), five organ sensors and the mind (sadayatana), relationship between the sensors and objects (sparsa), sensations (verdana), lust (trsna), that thrives on existence (upadana), determined to be borne (bhava) and birth (jati). The way is for human beings to move beyond the Noble Eightfold Road. The roads are (samma-ditthi), sane mind (samma-kammanta), right job (samma-ajiva), right efforts (samma-vayama), right realisation (samma-sati) and right concentration (samma-samadhi).

Buddha was once quoted saying: "Substantial doubts would lead us to a higher learning curve, while mild curiosities would us to milder understandings, the lack of curiosity on the other hand, means no learning can be achieved. Forbidden; not to kill – not to jeopardies other people's lives; not to steal – not to

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<sup>7</sup> Buddha (563-483 BC) was a Prince Suddhodana Gautama from the Shakya tribe of India. At the age of 29 years old he went to meditate in the forest of Urvela under the Bodhi tree. He never touched on faith in God while his followers were very engrossed with the quest of finding God and it was no coincidence that followers then started pondering on God. Until some started assuming that Buddha was not any human being but God's spirit was in him. His followers argued that God and his human form was one as he had God's spirit in him. That was why Buddha never spoke about God, because he was God.

cause harm to other peoples property; not to commit adultery – not to cause harm to other people’s purity; not to lie – not to spread falsehood that will effect people’s reputation and not to consume alcohol – not to harm your own rationality and harm other people’s safety”.

**Hindu;** In the Hindu religion, Holy Book of Rig Veda says “Loka Samastha Sukino Bhavantu” (Daily prayer for every day of worship) means all beings in this planed live freely and happily. Hindu religion believers or Sanatana Dharma (Eternal Laws, 3500 BC) belief in multiple Gods and the main referred to as timurthi; Brahma (God the creator), Vishnu (God the Protector) and Siva (God the Destroyer). The concept of God is that the entire God’s are appearances of the same God. The ultimate aim of Hindu believers is to achieve Moksha (freedom from the cycle of birth and death) through the trajectory of Raja Yoga (takafur), Jnana Yoga (sacred knowledge on the environment), Bakhti Yoga (love of God) and Karma Yoga (perfect devotion).

There six sects in the Hindu religion which Saivisme, Vaisnavisme, Saktha, Kaumaram, Ganapatiyam and Saurain. In the Hindu religion there are five core principles which are: Existence of the only God, human beings are pure, unity through love, religious harmony, knowledge of the holy river, holy book, holy manta. Ten disciplines that are universal which are honesty (satya), modesty (aparigraha), cleanliness (shaucha), satisfaction (santosh), studying the scriptures (swadhyaya), prudence (tapas) and prayer (pooja).

Studies by Clifford Geertz (1983) in Jawa and Bali suggested that communities that were faithful to the Hindu belief and way of life had a high working ethos. This proved that in several districts that were known to be industrialized for its trading and craftsmanship such as Pekalongan Kudus, Majalaya in which the santri (pious) race occupied. This was also proven by Gerhard Lenski through his study in Detroit, U.S (United States of America).

Syncretism of the Hindu religion and Islamic practices can be observed most conspicuously in the customs and traditions of the Malay community which shares similarities with the Hindu community. For an instance during marriages, usage of henna, fresh flour and other examples are borrowed from the Hindu culture, which is practiced by most Malays.

**In Christianity:** Prophet Isa a.s advocated, “Thou shall Love thy neighbor as thyself”. Through the Bible, whether it is the Old or New Testament, following the Ten Commandments demonstrates extraordinary propriety that Jesus practiced. Among the core principles of the Christian faith is that its followers have to love God and treat each other fairly and live harmoniously.

The celebration of Christmas carries the message of universal peace and unity for all. Protestants contributed to the economic development and modern industrialization of modern England and Western Europe. This was possible because they held on to Protestant belief that God expects good Christians to work hard, to save, to invest their savings, and to show business initiative) (Weber, 1930).

Protestant ethics also is said to play an important role in developing US citizens by shaping them to be personally resilient, having an initiative spirit, industrious and financially resilient.

**Confucianism;** Stresses on the same theme of universal harmony (no wars). Confucianism (551-479SM) emphasizes on positive values and human nature – compassion (ren), morality (li), loyalty to parents (xiao). This was the

philosophical and ethical understanding in teaching human behavior and conduct.

Confucianism<sup>8</sup> never forbade the Chinese people to worship shrines and other extraterrestrial beings but he was very clear that human beings should strive to be good. He stressed on reverence to be paid to ones ancestors and the concept of universal balance. The same shared that is observed in Jainism, Sikhism, Baha'i and Taoism.

His life philosophy was to raise the moral ethics of the humankind. Confucius teachings stressed on virtuous disposition by maintaining a good relationship with humans in the skies and humans on earth. His followers is thought always remember their forefathers as though their spirits were here on earth. Confucianism developed a form of ethical concept that was based on humans in this world that was human centered. For Confucius was very focused on the social life of human beings here on earth. The theoretical and practical question to harmonize this life on earth remains a question to be answered (Prof. Y. King (1997) in Dr. Abdul Halim (2008)).

Every action needs to be on *zhengming*, which is the position of each and everybody. The disposition of that role and duty should be based on the principle of justice (*yi*) and humanitarian grounds that is based on love or compassion (*ren*). Embedded with the concept of *zen* is the *zhong* (loyalty) and *shu* (forgiving and prioritizing other people). In other works *Zhong* means to strive to achieve something. This trait will bring about loyalty and obedience, trust among each other and devotion. While *Shu* (forgiveness) will on the other hand means to control our feelings and desires so that we do not do to others what we do not like others to do unto us. This trait brings about virtues such as philanthropy, toleration and sympathy for other (Cheng Gek Nai, 1997).

The concept of *ren* deals with our relationship with others. The self is the core of relationship with others. The concept of *repent* brings two meanings; one is to accept other peoples' talents and use as a lesson to learn; and two to learn from other peoples' mistakes (Dr. Ubaidullah Mohd Nasir, 2000). Confucius says in *Lun Yu*; "a noble person seeks for his own mistakes, deceitful person only sees flaws in other people". Confucius also believes in the concept of *ming* or fate. Confucius says "nobleman are always happy, ordinary people are always unhappy". However, this concept was opposed by follower, Mencius that held on to the believe that fate led to the habit of laziness and fatalism. The ethical thoughts of Confucianism is extracted from his books that his wrote, *Madah* (*Shi*), *Muzik* (*Yue*), *culture* (*Li*), *book on medicine* (*N*) and subsequent literature by his students such as the *Analect* or *Lun Yu* and *The Great Learning* among others. According to Benjamin I. Schwartz (1985), *The Analect* contained many normative teachings particularly on the subject of socio-politics, good demeanour, rituals, feasts and ethics. Confucius ethical guidelines are based on *Tian* (skies/God) or *Dao*. A great emphasis is given on the concept of family, politeness and solidarity or brotherhood.

Confucianism stresses on the five types of relationships (*wu lun*) which are: ruler and his/her people; parent and children, elder in the family and

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<sup>8</sup> In the 551 B.C. he wrote many books on morality, history, literature and philosophy that was adhered to by his followers. Confucius then was worshiped as a God even though he was just a human being. Extraordinary worship of his teachings led to his philosophies being turned into a religion by having festivals to commemorate him respecting him as a God.



his/her siblings, among friends and between husband and wife. For Confucianism, it is from the family ascends to become a community and then nation and finally world. All the ethical concepts are developed from the ren or human beings.

Lao Tze founded Taoism<sup>9</sup> through his book "The Way and Virtue". His teachings contained:

1. Highlighting primitive elements to achieve eternal life. Taoist followers should meditate in caves and mountains to cleanse themselves of their sins.
2. Anti-materialism, followers are asked to distance themselves from worldly things to be in desirable place after death.
3. Use deep understanding to promote peace in the community. Every human being has a form of energy in the soul. That energy can only be realized through the practice of yoga and meditation once one is able to empty his or her mind.

These teachings assume the 'human world' as something adverse and it is our duty to revive peace here on earth. Taoist philosophers conflicts Confucius teachings by assuming human beings as being naturally wicked whereas Confucius assumes human beings as being good by nature. The basis of Taoism is wuwei, which emphasizes on peace and modesty and avoidance from aggressive and violent behavior. This concept brings about the understanding that in order for one to take control of his/her environment is through understanding the environment and to form actions that is suitable to that environment ([www.chebucto.ns.ca/Philosophy/Taichi](http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Philosophy/Taichi)).

Taoist teachings are based on a simple and spontaneous life. His philosophies emphasizes on adaption of human beings to their environment. Taoism assumes that the human world is adverse, and calls for a direction towards harmony with the natural environment. Stealing, killing, robbery and war are peoples' trajectory to achieve material things through ways deemed not good. If people to not put materialism at center stage, then, peace would be natural and the need for control through law would be required. With the mushrooming of laws, then people are becoming less rich. With the development of nations, the society appears to be more in chaos, that is because a wise leader would say, "I have not achieved anything myself, the citizens themselves are good. I do not have any demands the people themselves are living in harmony" (Sivachandralingam Sundara Raja dan Ayadurai Letchumanan 2001). A government is where a leader does not have much to do, and does the little he/she can. Lao Tze summarizes the causes people citizens suffering and revolt.

The Sikh <sup>10</sup> religion covers important moral codes and spirituality including human spirituality transcending religious, race and gender distinctions

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<sup>9</sup> Also known as an old teacher was born in 604 B.C. He was rumored to be in his mother's womb for 82 years and was born as an old man.

<sup>10</sup> Founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1530) and continued by nine Sikh Gurus as enshrined in holy Guru Granth Sahib became the guidance for life. The Sikh believes in a monotheistic God. The holy book of the Sikh religion is called Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji that has is also know as the living Guru and is the main reference for Sikhism followers. The Holy Book is 1,430 pages thick is written and completed by Guru Sikh and are typically available in all Gurdwaras (places of worship) and houses of Sikhs. Its contents covers Sikh teachings and hymns for religious purposes and advice on life. Vaisakhi is the most significant prayers for Sikh followers. This festival is celebrated in April annually.

in society. The Sikh religion is monotheist and the crux of the religion is that God is one, amorphous, eternal, mighty and human beings are unable to decipher God. Sikhs believe God is omnipresent and God is the only being in essence of its meaning. Sikh followers mention God as Vaheguru which means "God the ever magnificent".

Gobind Singh (1675-1708) was the last Guru in the history of Sikhism. He introduced the concept of Khalsa brotherhood to strengthen the Sikh identity by using the five symbols which are known as the 5Ks, which are, kesh (rambut panjang), kangha (comb), kara (steel bangle), kirpan (small dagger) kachera (small undergarments with strings). Sikhism followers are expected to respect the 5Ks for peace in their lives and acceptance of the Sikh religion. Sikhs are a small minority in Malaysia. Most of the 90,000 Punjabis, which are an ethnic grouping of the Malaysian Indians, are Sikhs.

### **4.3 The Need for a State and Good Governance**

Rasulullah s.a.w. during his early Islamic evangelization (dakwah) periods stressed on the importance of congregation and the management of syura (council of intelligentsias). During his exodus to Madinah, he exposed to already independent country, which had its own constitution, the first in the world referred to as the Madinah Charter (Sahifah Madinah). Since that day, the development of Islamic has not taken a backstroke. Rasulullah s.a.w. 's leadership and inscriptions in the holy al-Quran on governance is well discussed and Islam's position on it is well defined.

For some states, the functions of governance and religions confluences as the head of the state is also the head of religion as in the case of the Egyptian government during Pharaohs. Sometimes the religious institutions as observed can strengthen the state during the traditional Malay governments and the European middle ages. These governments were robust as they embodied the doctrine of divine rulers in the state. Thus, here religion played an important role in supporting these rulers while maintaining order and rule added with customs.

The Taoist belief supports this idea. Tao means "journey", "goal", "art", "specialization". Confucius defines it as "reference to the art of governing a country" referring to ancient Chinese governments such as Emperors King Wen and Chou. Taoists defines Tao as something that in essence controls the environment that was from the beginning, prima material. Tao also is synonymized as Way of Heaven. It can be understood as idea of specialization and talent for certain things.

Lao Tze and Chung Tzu as the founders of Taoism stressed that suffering citizens are caused by leadership that squanders the tax monies collected and because leaders get too involved with too many things, that is the reason for citizens to revolt. As leaders are too occupied with the materialistic world, hence, citizens take life for granted. That is also why citizens are not concerned about life after death. That is largely because leaders are very concerned with this life here on earth. To continue with life, a person has to understand more that pay more emphasis on life itself (Sivachandralingam Sundara Raja dan Ayadurai Letchumanan, 2001 dan [www.chebucto.ns.ca/Philosophy.Taichi/lao](http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Philosophy.Taichi/lao)).

**Confucianism;** Howard F. Didsbury (1994) observes that the philosophies of Confucianism does not concern itself with metaphysics. Thinkers

of Confucianism like Confucius, Mencius (371-289 BC) and others were more concerned with questions on education, politics and society. They were concerned with questions on ethics and practical things on structures of society and the correct moral principles. Therefore, it is difficult to analyse Confucianism philosophies with reference to metaphysics, divinity and life after death. According Wang Gungwu (1997) what separates Confucianism with other belief systems, is that it places less emphasis to the spiritual life and avoids discussions on life after death but pays more attention to discussions on the life here on earth, social, family and morality. When asked about the passing on of his student, Confucius answered, "if we do not know about life, how are we going to know about death". He also once said "you do not know how to serve fellow human beings, how are you going to serve the soul?".

On the question of governing, Confucianism posits concepts of governing based on human characteristics. Confucianism stresses on governing based zhen ming (the exact reference), education on character and economy, leadership by example, to control once desires, to respect social principles and state laws, to reduce punishment by law and to fortify the educational system (Dr. Ubaidullah Mohd Nasir, 2000). A ruler that uses violence to fortify his/her regime has failed in governing, Confucius said, "Your duty is administer and not execute" (Lun Yu). A ruler that leads by good (de) example and with excellent character will be able to control himself/herself and citizens (Kelley L. Ross, 2000) while influencing his/her citizens to be loyal to be loyal. Confucius said:

"If a ruler is noble, than the citizens will submit to his/her decrees without fore; if the ruler is not a noble person than his/her citizens will not submit to decrees (Lun Yu).

"If a person is fair and honest, then he/she will not have any impediments on his/her subjects; if a person is not able to control his/her on actions, how does he/she control the demeanour of his/her subjects" (Lun Yu).

"Using positive correct to guide subjects, and good conduct to lead by example to be followed by the subjects" (Lun Yu).

Buddha also saw the importance of the state. Buddhism is about democracy and freedom. In the teachings of Buddha, fact and knowledge is thought not a command to be obeyed. Those that cannot understand can ask as many questions and these questions would be explained until it is understood.

## **5.0 Proposal for the study of Tamadun Islam to take into consideration the Functions of Islam in Malaysia**

In the context of Malaysia, the writer is of the opinion that besides Ethnic Relations, Tamadun Islam should also emphasize the issue of unity. Specifically, it should be based on Islam, as it is the official religion of the federation. These suggestions are as listed below;

### **5.1 Appreciation of the basis of Islam and social relations**

The appreciation of social relations and Islam is rather easy to comprehend but highly meaningful if fully practiced. It is based of mutual understanding, cooperative, brotherhood, empathy, mutual assurance and mutual respect.

## 5.2 Respect for the freedom of religion

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ  
بِالطَّغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى لَا  
أَنْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥٦﴾

(al-Baqarah 2 :256)

Meaning:

“There is no element of force in religion (Islam), as there is certainty (Islam) from fault (kufur). Therefore, those that do not belief in Tagnut, and is a pious believer of Allah, then they have kept to the conclusion (religious string) that is strong and will never break. And (remember), Allah The Mighty Listener, is Mighty Knowledgeable.”

وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ ﴿٤﴾  
وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَّا أَعْبُدُ ﴿٥﴾  
لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ ﴿٦﴾

(al-Kafirun 109:3-6)

Meaning:

“I (a Muslim) do not worship like you (non-Muslim) and you do not worship like me (a Muslim) for you your religion, and for me mine”.

Allah SWT further says;

... وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ...  
(al-Maidah 5:48)

Meaning:

“ If Allah desires then you would have been one ‘nation’ (race, religion and culture)... but this is to test you in doing what has been delivered to you”

## 5.3 Avoidance of Extremism, Chauvinism and Fanaticism

According to the context of language, extremism means to transgress a balance when interpreting or implementing a regulation, Chauvinism is to assume that a certain grouping/ethnicity is superior than others, others should be rejected or objected. Whereas fanaticism is to make individualistic assumptions and interpretations while other people's point of view is not given due consideration. According to the writer's observation, most popular belief systems in this world object this kind of activities.

Examples of chauvinism, extremism, fanaticism is the extermination of Indira Chandhi by the extremist Sikhs. Killing of Palestinians by Zionist regimes, World War II that was started by Nazism-Hitler and the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia are other examples. This phenomenon exists beyond race, ethnicity and religion.

#### 5.4 Dialogue though peace and intelligence

Religious pluralism and belief systems should be embraced. The method of embracing differences is through dialogue between the religiously informed, to harmonize relations between different religious communities to overcome religious extremism.

Muslims and non-Muslims should continuously be in dialogue and interaction with each other. Dialogue ethics include: to accept religious plurality and respect differences in thoughts like disposition, avoid ridiculing cultures, ethnicity and other people's religion. Politeness and etiquette should be maintained during dialogue. Allah SWT says:

فَقُولَا لَهُ، قَوْلًا لِّنَا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ ﴿٤٤﴾

(Surah Taha 20:44)

Meaning:

“therefore, it has to be spoken with pleasantries, so that there will be realization and consciousness”.

#### 5.5 Accept that human beings are from the same lineage (Adam and Siti Hawa)

The Christian faith, Islam and other religious belief systems including the Jewish faith agree that the human race begun with nabi Adam a.s. Allah SWT says:

يٰٓأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا  
وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ ۚ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ  
اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ﴿١﴾

(an-Nisa 4:1)

Meaning:

O fellow human beings! Worship your God who has created you (from) beginning with one (Adam), and creating onwards (Adam) his partner (wife – Hawa) , and also procreation from the two – descendants – many men and women. And worship Allah whom who you frequently ask by mentioning his Name, and nourish your relationship (silaturrahim) with people because Allah is always (monitoring) you.

### 5.6 Universal Human Rights and Universal Justice

The understanding and commitment to the issue of human rights that is common to all. Human beings generally accept common traits on morality, religion and universal concepts such as “Unity in Diversity”. Allah SWT says:

يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا  
يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ ءَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا أَعْدِلُوا هُوَ  
أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا  
تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾

(al-Maidah 5:8)

Meaning:

O pious people, you should always be the one defending justice because of Allah, clarify the truth and never harbor hate towards any other race as it would encourage you not to carry out justice. You should always be fair (to anyone) because being fair brings you closer to God. And be fervent to Allah, as Allah is Mighty Knowledgeable and thoroughly understands you and your doings.

Cooperation among different cultures encourages positivity among humans. Among the universal moral traits are: kindness, prudence, courteous, truthful, honest, hardworking, cooperative and community spirit.

### Applying courtesy and Islamic Principles in promoting ethnic and religious ties

Etiquette in associational life for Muslims and non-Muslims such as: intimate communication, visiting one another, being caring for each other, mutual respect; vigilant of your neighbors rights and valuables, a family like bond though different in belief system, being benevolent to your family and non-Muslim neighbors, polite with in conversations with non-Muslim neighbors and visiting during hours of need.

Islamic principles on human behavior with other ethnicities/religion like: freedom from slavery, vindication, force and freedom of religion can be

emphasized. Consensus seeking in rule, punitive-justice, equal distribution of wealth , education and so on can also be adopted.

### **5.7 Concept of Neighborhood that can be practiced**

The spirit of neighborhood should be practiced among its residence for harmony among the different ethnicities. This neighborhood spirit should be harbored should incorporate aspects such as: a sense of pride and love for the neighborhood, acquaintance and mutual help, a community type feeling, a sense of responsibility toward the harmony and peace in the neighborhood and consensus seeking in the decision making process. This concept of neighborhood can be practiced; at the workplace, at institutions/ organizations, through social activities, recreational activities, welfare activities and so on.

### **6.0 Conclusion**

In the context of Malaysia, the citizens should take into consideration the principles embedded in the Rukun Negara that stressed on faith in God. Why? Because its function is to promote a peaceful life; fulfills the needs of the ruler, art, civilization, a source of good morals, promotes and affirms development, unification, national pride and national unity (Shamsul Amri, 2007). In developing good traits amongst Malaysians, especially in tertiary education, Tamadun Islam should be sustained. In fact, it should strengthened with additional information and knowledge in promoting good traits on national unity and harmony that could be agreed upon by the different religions in Malaysia.

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