

Islam, Muslims and Religious Tolerance: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The Muslims since the inception of Islam have tolerated the people of various religious leanings during their encounters. This was brought about by the Islamic faith and its promulgations in the Glorious Qur'an championed by prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) himself. The prophet during his life time had preferred peace to violent behaviour in propagating the religion of Islam. He was tolerant and not aggressive, peaceful and not violent, and truthful and not a liar. He maintained the principle of moderation and not greed. The contemporary state of religious tolerance leaves much to be desired as religiosity (amalun Salih) is fading. This paper seeks to uproot the reasons for this abnormality and proffer solutions to these problems as they unfold.

Keywords: Religious tolerance, violence, peace, religiosity, pardon.

INTRODUCTION

What made Islam unique and incontrovertible is the degree of its tolerance towards other religions and nations. It accommodates its adherents and enjoined them to make peace among themselves and toward others. It is Islam that tolerated the injurious torture upon its adherents while in Makkah for twelve years during the period of Prophet Muhammad's mission between 610 C.E. and 622 C.E. This made some Muslims to migrate to Abyssinia and to later come back for the final migration to Madinah in 622 C.E. Studies of the verses of the Glorious Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet (S.A.W) clarify the view point of Islam from this subject matter. What can be deduced from the teachings of Islam is that Islam does not believe in absolute tolerance in every circumstance. It however emphasized tolerance in some conditions and in others it accepts war as a necessity only when an act of aggression is exhibited towards it. According to Albanna in Shittu (2014), wars in Islam is for the sake of stopping an aggressor, aiding truth and achieving justice. It is therefore a virtue because it encourages goodness and prosperity for the people when used in the right manner to stop wrong doing, corruption, transgression and oppression of the weak. Islam maintains the necessity of freedom of belief, expression and dialogue. It however condemns compromising in belief and lack of observance concerning the religious regulations by the believers. Tolerance in Islam is therefore not based on indifference towards religions and beliefs but the necessity of choosing between truth and falsehood and considering prophets as the introducers of truth to the people. These are the two essential fundamentals of tolerance in Islamic belief. The ethical and behavioural tolerance which provides a cultural ground to materialization of tolerance in belief and interaction, is a virtue highly praised and encouraged in Islam.

Concept of Tolerance

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary meanings of tolerance are:

- a. The willingness to accept or tolerate something or somebody.
- b. The willingness to accept or tolerate especially opinions or behavior that you may not agree with.
- c. The willingness to accept people who are not like you.
- d. The ability to suffer something especially pain, difficult conditions etc. without being harmed.
- e. The amount by which the measurement of a value can vary without causing problems (Hornby, 2010).

Except for 'e' definition, all of the remaining definitions have their implications in Islam in view of the emerged trends in Islamic perspective of tolerance which will be discussed later.

Al-Ihtimal is a word used for tolerance which means having power to absolve something or somebody. It is defined in Arabic as:

القدرة على إحتمال (Baalbaki, Baalbaki, 2005).

Of the five definitions, given in oxford dictionary, the second corresponds to the issue considered in this write-up. According to Nafisi (2018:5), three components of tolerance are recognizable in its general meaning. These include:

1. Presence of difference and diversity.
2. Presence of dissatisfaction with these beliefs.
3. Not to prohibit others whilst having power and capability.

Another word for tolerance which is also used in Islam is '*Al-Tasamuh*' which is defined as giving and receiving and not only hoping for some to give and others to receive (Sintang et al, 2013). In fact this very word was used by the Prophet (S.A.W.) for traders and customers when he said:

May Allah have mercy on a man who is tolerant when selling, buying, and seeking repayment (Bukhari,7 :1934).

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ عِيَّاشٍ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَسَانَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ مُطَرِّفٍ قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُنْكَدِرِ عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ رَجُلًا سَمَحًا إِذَا بَاعَ وَإِذَا اشْتَرَى وَإِذَا اقْتَضَى . رواه البخاري

Tolerance also can be viewed in religious and behavioural spheres. Diversities exist in doctrinal and belief systems and in our behaviours toward each other.

Tolerance in Belief System

The Glorious Qur'an shows that Islam believes in tolerance in the area of belief. This type of tolerance is grounded in Islam's understanding of the nature of reward and prophecy and does not arise from indifference towards religion and relativity in knowledge.

The Qur'an explains that human beings are free creatures who enjoy sufficient knowledge to distinguish between right and wrong on earth. It is through this that humans will enjoy reward and punishment.

The Glorious Qur'an states:

We showed him the way whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rest on his will) (Qur'an, 76:3)

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا

The Glorious Qur'an describes resurrection day as the day in which humans will receive, whatever they have earned without any injustice.

The day will every soul be required for what it earned; no injustice will there be that day, for Allah is swift in taking account. (Qur'an 40:17).

الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَا ظُلْمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

On that day will men proceed in companies sorted out to be shown the deeds that they (had done). Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good see it. And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it. (Qur'an 99:6-8)

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْنَدِرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِيُرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ (6) فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ (7) وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ (8)

Allah could have created all humans uniformly as His believers, but He has done so as a trial for humans, distinguishing their goodness and evilness, so as to reward them accordingly. The Glorious Qur'an affirms:

If Allah so willed, He could make you all one people: but He leaves straying whom He pleases, and He guides whom He pleases; but you shall certainly be called to account for all your actions. (Qur'an 16:93)

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ يَضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَلَتَسْأَلَنَّ عَمَّا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

He also said:

If your Lord had so willed, He could have made humankind one community. (Qur'an 11:118)

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ...

This is a reminder to humankind that they can be brought together by Allah on one faith and everyone on earth would have believed but all of them are on earth to be tested. (See also Qur'an 10:99 and Qur'an 6:35,107).

Allah added:

.... If Allah had willed, He could have guided all of you. (Qur'an 16:9)

وَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

Prophets are therefore heralds and admonishers who convey the divine message to people. They have not come to force people to live a prosperous life in this world and the hereafter. This is why prophets are referred to by Allah as 'the witness', 'warner', bearer of glad tidings and caller. Qur'an 33:45-46 contended:

O Prophet! Truly we have sent thee as a witness, a bearer of glad tidings and a warner. And as one who invites to Allah's (Grace) (Caller) by His leave and as a lamp spreading light.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا. وَدَاعِيَا إِلَى اللَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَسِرَاجًا مُنِيرًا.

He (Allah) expressed to Prophet Muhammad not to force humankind to Islam and his duty was to deliver the message to them which he did (Qur'an 10:99; Qur'an 17:54). People should willingly believe and not to be forced. The choice is theirs. Allah commanded the Prophet in the Glorious Qur'an to explain to humankind:

Say: 'O you men, now truth has reached you from your Lord! Those who receive guidance, do so for the good of their own souls; those who stray, do so to their own loss: and am not (sent) over you to arrange your affairs. (Qur'an 10:108)

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ

Based on the Quranic exhortations the Prophet was sent to convey the message to the people. It is based on this freedom that Islam also tolerates the opposition beliefs and allowing them the chance to either be convinced and accept the faith or deny the faith. The Qur'an categorically states:

Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy handhold, that never breaks, and Allah heareth and knoweth all things. (Qur'an 2:256).

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ.

In line with the definition of tolerance, it is willingness to accept behavior and beliefs that are different from your own, although you might not agree with such tendencies. This fair and objective attitude toward others has been part of Islamic practice based on its teachings since the inception of Islam.

The Glorious Qur'an has also sanctioned the way to confront with the belief of others through a wise and good

advice and dialogue in a beautiful manner. The Qur'an commands:

Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious; for the Lord knoweth best who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance. (Qur'an 16:125)

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بَالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ.

In order to follow the path of tolerance, the Qur'an advises Muslims not to dialogue with the people of the book except in the best way and manner. Qur'an explains:

And dispute ye not with the people of the Book except with means better (then mere disputation) unless it be with those of them who inflicts wrong (or injury)...

Muslims are enjoined to focus on common beliefs in their arguments (Qur'an 29:46). Muslims are also called upon in the Glorious Qur'an to desist from abusing the objects of worship of the disbelievers in order not to abuse Allah ignorantly (Qur'an 6:108).

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَذَلِكَ زَيْنًا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلُهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

All these are geared towards, tolerance in Islamic belief system.

Allah (S.W.T) also commanded Muslims to deal with the Non-Muslims considerably and justly as long as they did not commit an act of aggression against them by driving and expelling or help in expelling the Muslims from their homes (Qur'an 60:8-9).

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ (8) إِنَّمَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَىٰ إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَنْ تَوَلَّوهُمْ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (9)

Jabir ibn Abdullahi reported that a funeral went past the Prophet (S.A.W) and he stood up. The companions informed him that it is the funeral of a Jew. He answered that it is a soul and that everybody in Islam has a respect and a place. (Al-Qaradawy, 1995).

The birth of Islam led to the meeting of the religion with Christianity, Judaism and with others including Zoroastrianism in Persia, Shamanism in Middle Asia and Mongolia as well as Hinduism and Buddhism in India. The experiences encountered led to the shaping and understanding of Muslims towards other religions and produce the concept of Islamic tolerance. History had shown great examples of tolerance by the Muslims. For example, Umar Ibn al-Khattab allowed Jews to return to Jerusalem, after they were banished by the Roman ruler since 132 A.D. Under the administration of Salahuddin al-Ayyubi in 1187 C.E, the Christians were given the assurance to use their worship houses and the Jews' holy places were protected. The same situation occurred in Islamic Spain during the time of the Muslim rule starting from 711 C.E. Until the fall of Granada in 1492 C.E. This period displayed the harmonious co-existence of the three Abrahamaic Communities – Jews, Christians and Muslims. (Sintang, et al., 2013).

Tolerance in behavior

Aside bearing with the opposing beliefs, the behavioral tolerance is significant in providing a community whose capacity to bear others is high. However, tolerance in the scene of ethics and behavior does not mean being indifferent towards improper and indecent behaviors. In practice, the rule dominating the behavior towards others, either with fellow Muslims or non-Muslims both concerning their beliefs and behavior is to neglect the fallacies and show kindness, sympathy, and gentleness to respond to the evil with kindness.

Be patient with anything they may say, and steer clear of them in a polite manner. (Qur'an 73:10)

وَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاهْجُرْهُمْ هَجْرًا جَمِيلًا

Right from the inception of Islam in Makkah the Prophet (S.A.W.) and his followers were ordered to be tolerant and patient with all the annoying words and acts of their opponents. The non-believers indeed gave the Prophet (SAW) and his companion's wrong names and maltreated them but they were tolerant. Allah mentioned:

You shall certainly be tried and tested in your possessions and in your personal selves; you shall certainly hear much that will grieve you, from those who received the book before you and from those who worship many gods. But if you persevere patiently and guard against evil, then that will be a determining factor in all affairs (Qur'an 3:186).

لَتُبْلَوْنَ فِيْ أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَلَتَسْمَعَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَذًى كَثِيْرًا وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ (186)

Also,

Nor can goodness and evil be equal. Repel (evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as if were thy friend and intimate (Qur'an 41:34).

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ (34)

The prophet's condition in the early days of revelation at Makkah and the injury he sustained in Ta'if after he was stoned is a good example of tolerance. He began to preach in public in Makkah pointing out the folly in the worship of idol which was rampant in Makkah. He invited them to worship only one God and to abandon the bad practice of buying female daughters alive. This made the Makkans to become very hostile and began to persecute his companions. Some were beaten to death; some of them were tied one leg to one camel and the other leg to another camel, and the two camels driven in opposite direction, with the result that the poor victim was torn into two in a violent death (Abdul, 1981:26-27). The wealthy among the companions were tabooed by their relatives and the society. This persistent persecution made some Muslims to first migrate to Abyssinia at the head of Uthman Ibn Affan. This also made the prophet to move to Ta'if after the death of his Uncle Abu-Talib but he was stoned there. He spent ten days in Taif and nobody accepted his mission amidst persecution. When Allah sent angels to him to permit the angel for their destruction, the Prophet (SAW) instead refused and said:

لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ أَنْ يَخْرُجَ مِنْ أَصْلَابِهِمْ مَنْ يَعْبُدُهُ وَلَا يَشْرِكُ بِهِ شَيْئًا

Perhaps Allah will bring forth among their progenies those that will worship Him and will not associate anything to Him. (Abdulwahab, 1418:114)

This is the condition he was for the thirteen years he stayed in Makkah before his migration. He preached tolerance and urged his followers to be tolerant. The Prophet (S.A.W) and his followers endured the pangs of the journey to Madinah which is far from Makkah. This journey marked a turning point in the history of Islam and the Muslims. He was recognized for the first time as a political head and a Prophet though it was not clear whether political rights were accorded him (Abdul, 1981).

Shehu Usman Ibn Fodio's migration resembled that of the Prophet (S.A.W). Shehu was patient and tolerant in his preaching activities (*Da'wah*) and preferred Islamic conduct than the worldly gains. He was tolerant in his resolve. That is the more reason why when King Bawa invited him and gave him gifts he politely turned them down asking instead something more valuable to him and the mission he has come to be identified with. He instead made five requests to the king:

1. To allow him call people to Allah throughout his region of Gobir.
2. Not to stop or obstruct anybody responding to the Shehu's call.
3. To treat with respect anyone with a turban and women decently dressed.
4. To free all political prisoners.
5. Not to burden the subjects with taxes. (Bugaje, 2015)

These demands, of course revealed a lot about the social and political situation of the time and the tolerant behavior of the Sheikh. Turban for men and Islamic outfit for women had become a mark of Islamic consciousness that his *Da'wah* has raised. This unprecedented singular act of rejecting worldly gifts earned him a higher station and endeared him not only to his followers but also the ordinary people whose interest he identified with and stuck out his neck to protect. After all these, he witnessed hostilities of the subsequent governments of Yunfa and Nafata that made him to migrate with his followers tolerantly to Gudu. He achieved success after migration, Sheikh Usman Ibn Fodio was described as neither an extremist nor an intolerant man who prefers to win people to his fold through preaching, teaching and discussion rather than by force (Clerk, 1982:).

The actions of the Prophet (S.A.W) carried a lot of messages on tolerance. For example, a Savagery Arab or a rustic passed urine in the mosque of the Prophet S.A.W. Some people got up to rough-handle him, where upon the Prophet said: let him go and pour a bucket of water over it to wash it out. You have been raised up to make things easy and not to make them hard (Bukhari,19: 5663).

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الْيَمَانِ أَخْبَرَنَا شُعَيْبٌ عَنِ الزُّهْرِيِّ وَقَالَ اللَّيْثُ حَدَّثَنِي يُونُسُ عَنْ ابْنِ شِهَابٍ أَخْبَرَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُثْمَانَ أَنَّ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ أَعْرَابِيًّا بَالَ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ فَتَنَارَ إِلَيْهِ النَّاسُ لِيَقْعُوا بِهِ فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ دَعُوهُ وَأَهْرِيقُوا عَلَى بَوْلِهِ ذُنُوبًا مِنْ مَاءٍ أَوْ سَجَلًا مِنْ مَاءٍ فَإِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُمْ مُسَيِّرِينَ وَلَمْ تُبْعَثُوا مُعَسِّرِينَ

The Christians of Banu Najran in the 7th Century visited the Prophet (S.A.W) and interacted with him and allowed them to worship in his mosque in their Christian way.

The Prophet freed a non-Muslim and let him go his way when he intended to strike on the Prophet and the weapon let loose and the Prophet took it. He promised however not to fight him again throughout his life (Khan 1985:64-65).

A Savagery Arab rustic came up and violently jerked the cloak of the Prophet (S.A.W). The jerk bruised the base of the neck of the Prophet (S.A.W) asking the Prophet to give him out of Allah's provision that is with Him. The Prophet (S.A.W) turned to him and smiled and directed that he be given something (Bukhari and Muslim).

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ بُكَيْرٍ حَدَّثَنَا مَالِكٌ عَنْ إِسْحَاقَ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ كُنْتُ أَمْشِي مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَعَلَيْهِ بُرْدٌ نَجْرَانِيٌّ غَلِيظٌ الْحَاشِيَّةُ فَأَذْرَكَهُ أَعْرَابِيٌّ فَجَذَبَهُ جَذْبَةً شَدِيدَةً حَتَّى نَظَرْتُ إِلَى صَفْحَةِ عَاتِقِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَدَأَّرْتُ بِهِ حَاشِيَةَ الرِّدَاءِ مِنْ شِدَّةِ جَذْبَتِهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ مُرِّي مِنْ مَالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي عِنْدَكَ فَالْتَفَتَ إِلَيْهِ فَضَحِكَ ثُمَّ أَمَرَ لَهُ بِعَطَاءٍ

Ibn Mas'ud related that he can recall seeing the Prophet (S.A.W) while he recounted that a Prophet of Allah who was beaten and wounded by his people kept wiping the blood away from his face and supplicated: Allah do forgive my people for they know not (Bukhari and Muslim in (Bukhari, 11: 3218).

حَدَّثَنَا عُمَرُ بْنُ حَفْصٍ حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي حَدَّثَنَا الْأَعْمَشُ قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي شَقِيقٌ قَالَ قَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ

كَأَنِّي أَنْظَرُ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَحْكِي نَبِيًّا مِنْ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ ضَرَبَهُ قَوْمُهُ فَأَدْمَوْهُ وَهُوَ يَمْسَحُ الدَّمَ عَنْ وَجْهِهِ وَيَقُولُ اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِقَوْمِي فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

The Prophet (S.A.W) also testified to his companions over their tolerance and gentleness. It was reported from Ibn Abbas (R.A) that:

The Prophet (S.A.W) said to Ashajj Abd al-Qais: You possess two qualities which Allah loves: gentleness and tolerance (Muslim: 24).

وَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لِلْأَشَجِّ عَبْدِ الْقَيْسِ إِنَّ فِيكَ خَصْلَتَيْنِ يُحِبُّهُمَا اللَّهُ الْجُمُ وَالْأَنَاءُ

This hadith explains the fact that some companions of the Prophet who are tolerant are praised and loved by Allah (S.W.T) as these are cherished qualities.

All these are the historical perspective of tolerance in the early days of Islam.

Among the principles and values which Islam preaches is tolerance to Non-Muslims and transaction with them in a highly civilized way without bias or envy on one who opposes Islam. Christian and Jews have a special treatment as they all came from the father of all Prophets; Prophet Ibrahim (A.S). The Glorious Qur'an call them the people of the book, marrying their daughters is lawful for a Muslim (Qur'an 5:5). Marital relationship is one of the basic bonds of humanity (Qur'an 25:54; 30:21).

Al-Qaradawy (1995: 285) on the implication of these two verses commented:

And the meaning of a Muslim marrying a daughter of the people of the Book means that his relatives-in-law, grandparents of his children and aunts and uncles, and cousins are of the People of the Book, and these have the right of blood connection, and relatives which Islam makes obligatory.

It is therefore difficult to see anything more compromising in regard to tolerance with difference in religion and something higher than this broad mindedness which we find in the law of Islam.

The Dhimmis are those non-Muslims with permanent treaty with the Muslims to safe-guard their property and blood. They have the trust of Allah (SWT), His Prophet (S.A.W) and the Muslim Community. They have what it takes to live in a Muslim Community freely except what is connected with differences in faith. In short, they are citizens of the Islamic State (Al-Qaradawy, 1995:286). The highest form of tolerance is for the Muslims not to torment the opponent in what he considers lawful in his religion or sect, even if he believes that it is wrong in Islam. This was how the Muslims treated their covenanted opponents.

In spite of cruelties suffered by the Muslims in Makkah, the Prophet (S.A.W) sent money to the people of Makkah during famine to be distributed to the poor (Al-Qaradawy, 1995:289).

Asma' the daughter of Abu-Bakr welcomed her polytheist Mother in Madinah with the permission of the Prophet (S.A.W) under the jurisdiction of Quraish and the treaty of Hudaibiya (Al-Qaradawy, 1995).

The Prophet (S.A.W) used to visit the Jews and Christians, respect them and do good to them. He visited the sick among them and gives and take from them (Al-Qaradawy, 1995:290).

During Umar Ibn Abdul-Aziz time, he did not want even an atheist to feel compelled and regarded a caliph as an affectionate father and not as a ruler. This led many people to embrace Islam during his time willingly and there was absolute peace (Najeebabadi, 2001).

The Contemporary Perspective of Tolerance

In the modern world of Islam, tolerance has become a virtue cherished by only those who take a cursory look at issues in their historical perspective. Those who believe in the unseen and are patient in persevering in the worship and adoration of only one Allah whose law is cherished and abided by. Perhaps the best ground on which Islam thrive and spread like wild wind is in a tolerant enclave where there is justice, freedom of speech and fair play.

Intolerance breeds insecurity and security is ranked second in the hierarchy of human needs, which humans seek to satisfy first after psychological needs. These include security of body, employment, of resources, of morality and of family, of health and of property (Laahmang, 2022). Even in paradise humankind is assured of complete absence of hunger and nakedness. He will not suffer from thirst and from sun's heat (Qur'an 20:118-119). Humankind is thus assured of security, it was related from Uthman Ibn Affan (R.A) that the Prophet (S.A.W) said:

The Son of Adam has no better right than he would have a house where in he may live, and a piece of cloth whereby he may hide his nakedness and a piece of bread and some water. (Tirmidhi 4:2341 Bab Minnah).

Social Scientists delved into the notion of tolerance among Muslims with other non-Muslims and came up with the fact that religiosity in general is not associated with tolerance but higher level of Muslims interreligious interaction with non-Muslims. For example, Prasetyo and Halimatu Sa'diyah (2024), examined the patterns of

social, religious and political tolerance in Indonesia. Results show that religiosity in general is not associated with tolerance, nor are other variables such as democracy and socio-economic status. Instead, higher levels of Muslims' interreligious interaction with non-Muslims are positively associated with higher social, religious and political tolerance. On the other hand, Muslims' participation in religious study clubs (*Pengajian*) as a form of intrareligious interaction is significantly related to lower levels of social, religious and political tolerance. As such, friendship between ordinary religious groups is key to reducing intolerance.

The implication of this study is that there is need for Muslims to engage in interfaith dialogue with Non-Muslims for higher religious, social and political tolerance.

Simon and Schaefer (2017) employed a longitudinal design to test two hypotheses concerning Muslims' respect for and tolerance towards disapproved out groups. In support of the out-group respect-tolerance hypothesis derived from the disapproval-respect model of social tolerance, their results strongly suggest that respect for disapproved out groups is not just a correlate of tolerance towards those groups, but a causal antecedent. In support of the intergroup respect reciprocity hypothesis, they identified respect from disapproved out groups and therefore as (distal) source of tolerance towards those groups. This implies that the more respect others extend to the Muslims and their religion the higher the respect of Muslims towards them. Also the more interaction the Muslims make with other groups the more tolerant Muslims will be.

Milligan, Andersen and Brym (2014) assessed the influence of Islam at the individual and national levels on ethnic, racial and religious tolerance in 23 countries. They based their analyses on a set of multilevel models fitted to world values, survey data and national-level contextual information from various sources. Findings revealed that people living in Muslim-majority countries tend to be less tolerant than are those living in Western Countries. Although, this difference is significantly attributable to variation in level of economic development and income inequality, Muslim countries remain less tolerant even after controlling for these factors. On the other hand, controlling for other individual-level factors, non-practicing Muslims in Western Countries are more tolerant than are all others in both Muslim-majority and Western Countries. According to the researcher, this finding challenge common claims on the effects of Islam as a religion on tolerance, suggesting that it is Islamic political regimes – not Islam itself, that pose problems for social tolerance.

Though findings from this research identify with the fact that Islam itself pose problems for social tolerance, this is far from the truth as traces of such assertion could not be ascertained in history and practice of most practicing Muslims. However, from whichever circle this finding may emanates, it is significant to put the ball rolling for the Muslims of the contemporary world to improve on their religious practice that will include tolerance as defined by Islam.

The challenges posed by contemporary Muslim Community is zero tolerance in matters of worldly wealth acquisition and piling. People also vie for positions by all means and perpetuate corrupt practices as they desired to satisfy their ego. This is what Sheikh Lemu (d. 2020) used to refer to as *Son Zuciya* (Selfishness), *Son Dukiya* (love of wealth) and *Son Mulki* (love of power). A nation is bound to disintegrate if it is engaged in corrupt practices (Quran, 7:56 and 28:77).

CONCLUSION

The religion of Islam revolves around hope and fear of the One and Only Creator (Allah). The Glorious Qur'an explicitly explains:

Verily, they used to hasten on to do good deeds, and they used to call on us in hope and in fear, (Qur'an, 21:90).

This hope and fear in the mind of a believing Muslim make him a tolerant believer who is conscious of Allah's injunction. He therefore embraces the way of tolerance through religiosity (*'Amal*). This tolerance is embraced at individual, group and state levels by Muslims because of their hope in huge success not only in this world but in the hereafter. However, as tolerant as Islam is, it teaches zero tolerance for injustice, oppression and violation of the rights of other human beings.

The culture of tolerance can only be built if religious tolerance and behavioral tolerance are accepted as common

practice - Muslim and non-Muslims alike. The higher the tolerance of behavior, the higher is religious tolerance, which is manifested through supportive relationship between people from different religions. Extensive interaction through encounters, acquaintance and co-existence that shapes brotherhood, friendship and kinship is the best formula in nurturing the culture of tolerance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to Sintang et al., (2013) tolerance has been a popular issue often discussed in inter-religious fora. This should be because of its significance in putting together a progressive nation. It is on this premium that the following recommendations are formulated:

1. The path of religious and behavioral tolerance rooted in patience and perseverance should be embraced by all.
2. Tolerance without borders as employed by the West that gives absolute freedom to human rights should be avoided as it creates room for intolerance. For example, an individual who wants to practice free sex, same sex marriage, homosexuality and sodomy according to the West should be allowed to fulfill his wish based on the western perspective of tolerance.
3. Islamic perspective of tolerance (al-Tasamuh, or al-Ihtimal) in contrast to Western Perspective should be embraced and given priority attention as it had ever led Muslims to achieve progress in the world. Islam proposes that its followers should hold on to the principle of truth, without disregarding respect towards non-Muslims.
4. Humankind should hold onto the golden rule of religious tolerance of 'doing onto others what we want them to do for us.
5. The new generation should appreciate the culture of tolerance in order to allow room for cohesion and harmony among humankind.
6. Interreligious dialogue through softer approach as against old defensive approach should be encouraged. This can be achieved through appreciating the similarities and respecting differences that exist within each religion.
7. Multiple forms of religious interaction without limiting them to dialogue alone between religious figures should be embraced. This should be extended to schools and higher institutions of learning so that prejudice may be curbed and managed at the earlier stage.

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