

# Toleration and justice two important ingredients for societal harmony

By [Dr Mohamad Nasrin Nasir](#) - January 20, 2023 @ 7:52pm



Tolerance of different religions require us to have correct knowledge of their beliefs and practices and it requires us to be just in dealing with them. -NSTP/AIZUDDIN SAAD

THE issue of toleration has recently been discussed in an inter-religious discourse. It is seen to be an important factor when dealing with inter religion.

Rightfully so, for if without toleration there would be problematic relations and misunderstandings within a multireligious society.

A neighbour who is of a different religion from us would practise certain actions connected to that religion which might encroach upon our personal space via soundwave or visual sights.

However, as we live in a multiracial society, we tolerate such actions.

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mine so the spirit of toleration implies compromise. Toleration also means to tolerate not only the strength of someone but also their weakness due to their lack of understanding.

There is also another concept which is more important than tolerance and that is justice. In fact, justice should be the basis for all human actions.

Aristotle in his Nicomachean Ethics, a book written to his son Nicomachea had said that justice is a result of action done by the virtuous individual.

To Aristotle, as he explained to his son, virtues are an important aspect of all human actions. In fact, Aristotle believed that all human actions have virtue as its aim. Virtue is an act that is balanced between two opposite extremes.

For example, courage is a virtue but it is between being a coward on one extreme and too flamboyant in the other extreme. According to Aristotle virtuous actions should be the aim of all human beings that is why he starts with his son.

Nicomachean Ethics was written to educate his son in regard to virtue so that his son would become a virtuous person.

In an inter-religious setting, we find that to be just is the best basis for toleration to happen.

It is mentioned in many verses of the Quran, however, we shall limit ourself to just two: "God does not love the unjust!" (60:8) ; "Do not let the hatred that you have for a certain group lead you to be unjust with them!" (5:8).

So, to know justice and to act in a just manner is a command in the Quran for how could one not be unjust if one does not know what justice is in the first place? To act in a just manner requires elaboration and of course an education.

To be just in the dealing with different religions would require an openness to learn and to listen, in other words to gain knowledge about the other.

In a multireligious society as we have in Malaysia, learning about and from the various different religions is the only way we can achieve harmony and respect.

For the society is like a human body says the Prophet if one part of the body is hurt then the other part would also feel the pain and suffer as a result. How can you not feel hurt and empathise when someone in your neighbourhood is suffering from illness or whatnot.

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taught us just that it was impossible for us to ignore whatever that happens in our world will influence our personal space.

The idea of peace includes people of different religions and cultures than us for the holy Prophet was supported in Medina by not only Muslims but non-Muslims whom he regarded as part of the ummah of Medina in the constitution.

The whole idea that privileges one religion against the other is an idea not based upon justice but based upon a bias understanding of justice. Justice is good in all aspects and settings and within it are compromise and tolerance to each other.

To be unjust which God regards as being a sin and against His commands can be regarded as an imbalance, one gaining more than the other or in other words discrimination between the two with one being privileged against the other.

Tolerance of different religions require us to have correct knowledge of their beliefs and practices and it requires us to be just in dealing with them. To act in an unjust way and denying the correct knowledge of the other from reaching the public will not lead to societal harmony.

Therefore, comparative religious discourse should be encouraged in a multi religious society as Malaysia.

**The writer is an associate professor at the International Institute of Islamic Thought & Civilization, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)**

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