

Tolerance

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As a nation we are experiencing an intense fervor of recovery and revival. If a wind of opposition does not hinder us the coming years will be our "years of becoming." However there are differences in methods of recovery and revival. There has been a difficulty in arriving at a mutual agreement as to which methods we should accept and which we should reject regarding the renewals in our intellectual and cultural life over the last few centuries. Also there has been a difference in style and method used in blowing a new spirit into society. The nuances that appear in building a bridge between the past and future fill us with hope yet at the same time it seems that troubled days await us.

Thus while walking toward the future as a whole nation tolerance is our safest refuge and our fortress against the handicaps that arise from schism factions and the difficulties inherent in reaching mutual agreement; troubles that lie waiting at every corner.

We should have such tolerance that we are able to close our eyes to the faults of others to have respect for different ideas and to forgive everything that is forgivable. In fact even when faced with violations of our inalienable rights we should remain respectful to human values and try to establish justice. Even before the coarsest thoughts and the crudest ideas that we find impossible to share with the caution of a Prophet and without losing our temper we should respond with mildness. This mildness is presented in the Qur'an as "gentle words"; it will touch the hearts of others. This mildness is the result of a tender heart a gentle approach and mild behavior. We should have so much tolerance that we can benefit from opposing ideas in that they force us to keep our heart spirit and conscience active and aware even if these ideas do not directly or indirectly teach us anything.

Tolerance a term which we sometimes use in place of the words respect mercy generosity or forbearance is the most essential element of moral systems; it is a very important source of spiritual discipline and a celestial virtue of perfected people.

Under the lens of tolerance the merits of believers attain new depths and extend to infinity; mistakes and faults become insignificant and whither away until they are so small that they can be placed into a thimble. In fact the treatment of He Who is beyond time and space always passes through the prism of tolerance and we wait for it to embrace us and all of creation. Because of the broadness of this embrace when a corrupt woman who had given water to a thirsty dog touched the knocker of the "Door of Mercy" she found herself in a corridor extending to chastity and Heaven. Similarly due to the deep love he felt for God and His Messenger a drunk suddenly shook himself free and attained companionship of the Prophet. In another example with the smallest of Divine favors a bloody murderer was saved from his monstrous psychosis and headed toward the highest rank; a rank that far surpassed his natural ability and one that in the end he actually reached.

We all want everyone to see us through this lens and we expect the breezes of forgiveness and pardon to constantly blow in our surroundings. All of us want to refer our past and present to the climate of tolerance and forbearance that melts transforms cleans and purifies and then to walk toward the future securely without feeling any anxiety. We do not want our past to be criticized or our future to be darkened because of our present. All of us expect love and respect for a whole lifetime hope for tolerance and forgiveness and want to be embraced with feelings of liberality and affection. We expect tolerance and forgiveness from our parents in response to mischief at home from our teachers in response to our misbehavior at school from those innocent victims toward whom we have acted unjustly and oppressed from the judge and prosecutor in court from our army commanders from police officers and from the Judge of Judges in the Highest Tribunal.

However deserving what we expect is very important. Anyone who does not forgive has no right to expect forgiveness. Everyone will receive disrespect to the degree that he has been disrespectful. Anyone who does not love is not worthy of being loved. Those who do not embrace all of humankind with tolerance and forgiveness have lost their worthiness to receive forgiveness and pardon. An unfortunate one who curses others does not have the right to expect respect from others. Those who curse will be cursed and those who beat will be beaten. If true Muslims observed such Qur'anic principles as the following and were to go on their way and tolerate curses deep in their breasts then others would appear in order to implement the justice of Destiny on those who cursed us.

When they meet hollow words or unseemly behavior they pass them by with dignity. (Al-Furqan 25:72)

If you behave tolerantly overlook and forgive (their faults) ... (At-Taghabun 64:14)

In countries rife with corruption intolerance and mercilessness such things as freedom of thought polite criticism and the exchange of ideas according to norms of equity and fair-minded debate are absent; it would be meaningless to talk of the results of logic and inspiration. In my opinion this must be the real reason that for years no progress has been made in spite of plenty of empty boasting.

For years there have been numerous examples of immorality—my values do not allow me to speak about them openly—although their perpetrators have received their share of tolerance. Despite this attempts continue to be made to label innocent people as "backward fanatics who support theocratic regimes" "Fundamentalism" is another fashionable term with which to smear them. Moreover, Islam has been accused of not keeping up with the times. We frequently observe with sorrow today that those who did nothing more than express their religious feelings have been branded as reactionaries fanatics and fundamentalists. Unfortunately some people do not distinguish between being truly religious and blind fanaticism.

It is not possible to talk about common ideas or a collective consciousness in communities where individuals do not look

upon one another with tolerance or in countries where the spirit of forbearance has not become fully entrenched. In such countries ideas will devour one another in the web of conflict. The work of thinkers will be futile and in such countries it will not be possible to establish sound thought or freedom of belief or thought. These things will not be allowed to flourish. In fact it cannot be said that in such a country the state has been based on a true system of justice; even if this appears to be the case it is nothing more than a sham. Actually in a place where there is no tolerance it is not possible to talk about a healthy media scholarly thought or pertinent cultural activities either. What we see when we look at the things that carry such names are only some fruitless one-sided efforts made according to certain thoughts and a certain philosophy; expecting something fresh beneficial and promising for the future from these is futile.

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