



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF TOLERANCE IN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

In the current 21st century, the growing processes of globalization, when it is possible for a person to live and work freely and safely in society, is one of the most pressing topics of our time. If we take into account how many of the activities of international organizations, policies and programs of states are focused on this topic, we can see that members of today's society have not yet achieved stability and general well-being.

Although the priority laws and religious rules are always aimed at ensuring a happy and prosperous life for people, it can be seen that the principles of tolerance are not given enough attention in practice. In this article we tried to analyze this situation using the example of the history of Turkey and Iran, since they, like most countries in the world, have gone through a similar experience. Accordingly, a brief study of this issue allowed us to present certain conclusions.

KEYWORDS

Tolerance, society, people, development, religion, country, reform, person.

INTRODUCTION

Tolerance and forbearance refer to being accepting and respectful of the lifestyles, behaviors, customs, emotions, opinions, ideas, and beliefs of others and those around us. In modern life, tolerance holds immense importance. To promote tolerance in all

aspects, the United Nations General Assembly declared in 1996 that this date would be celebrated worldwide as the “International Day for Tolerance.” In our society, tolerance toward the unique characteristics of various nations, ethnicities, and



religions is evident. Our Constitution underscores this principle with the provision: "In the Republic of Uzbekistan, all citizens are equal in rights and freedoms, regardless of gender, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, beliefs, personal and social status, and all are equal before the law." This serves as the legal foundation for fostering tolerance. This concept has also been deeply rooted in our religious and cultural values for centuries. Ease and gentleness are fundamental principles of every divine religion. According to the interpretation of the Qur'an, divine religion is a natural matter—a precious gem essential for human perfection. Consequently, divine decrees and practical guidelines align with human nature. In sacred Islamic law, any directive that does not resonate with the essence of human nature cannot exist, and anything that contradicts the core of human existence is opposed by Sharia.

Islam, as the most complete divine religion, is based on these principles, with its ease and adaptability reflected in laws and regulations derived from verses and hadiths.

Tolerance and patience toward opposing beliefs and behaviors, particularly those based on religious doctrines, are known as "religious tolerance." In contrast, rigidity and intolerance toward conflicting beliefs and actions, especially in religious contexts, stemming from strict adherence to religious teachings, are referred to as "opposition" or "religious intolerance".

According to its definition, tolerance in religious consciousness is inherent in the principle of accepting religion. This implies that individuals are free and confident in choosing and accepting a religion. This freedom is based on the philosophy and wisdom of human creation, as well as on truth, perfection, and the advancement of humanity, which rest on the foundation of free will and confidence. The purpose of human creation is to achieve perfection through

voluntary actions. In addition to granting humans free will and power, they have also been endowed with awareness and knowledge to understand and pursue this concept.

Although human power and will are not perfect, and their tools of knowledge—emotions, senses, and intellect—are designed to discern the true path to perfection and complete happiness, these tools enable humans to navigate the journey of life. Thus, by nurturing their tools of self-awareness and with the guidance and revelations of divine messengers (peace be upon them), individuals can tread the path of guidance and salvation with complete freedom and choice.

In Islam, an individual is fundamentally free to choose and accept their religion, as affirmed by the Qur'anic verse:

"There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the right path has become distinct from the wrong." (Surah Al-Baqarah, 256). This indicates that religion and belief cannot be imposed; they must be embraced through conviction and consent. While tafsir (interpretations) of the verses elaborate on their meanings, the words of Allah should be understood in a broader context.

Looking back at history, one can observe that the principle of tolerance has been key to the prosperity and progress of societies. For example, in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* (940–1020), the contrasting fates of states during the eras of Zahhak (marked by decline) and Faridun (characterized by flourishing prosperity) highlight the impact of tolerance on societal development. The lack of learning from history often leads to its repetition.

The shared histories of Turkey and Iran over the last century clearly illustrate the outcomes of adopting tolerant approaches. Two neighboring countries with similar cultural backgrounds witnessed two influential leaders rise to power in the same era. Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran (1878–1944) and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk



of Turkey (1881–1938) both pursued similar goals—modernizing and reforming their societies to achieve progress and secure a dignified place in the global community. They initiated a series of reforms to advance their nations in all respects.

It has now been 101 years since Atatürk came to power in 1923 and 99 years since Reza Shah's rule began in 1925. However, as we observe today, the political and economic situations of these two nations differ significantly. The political, economic, and cultural development of these countries, as well as their roles in the global community and international politics, have taken markedly different paths. This divergence reflects the profound impact of governance approaches, particularly the adoption of tolerance, on societal outcomes.

In 1815, during the crisis of the Ottoman Empire, rebels and revolutionaries began to rise across the country. The Greeks, Serbians, Bulgarians, and Romanians sought to free themselves from Ottoman influence. This issue persisted for years, leading to the formation of a group called the "Young Turks" by Turks advocating for nationalism. Operating within Ottoman territories, the Young Turks demanded constitutional governance.

When Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1842–1918) came to power, the Ottoman-Russian war was at its peak. Despite becoming a powerful political force, many members of the Young Turks lost their lives in the war. Nevertheless, the group established a secret organization called the "Committee of Union and Progress." In 1908, this group and the Young Turks staged a coup and seized control of the government. Upon assuming power, the Young Turks began expelling non-Turkish ethnic groups, such as Armenians and Greeks, from Ottoman territories. Shortly afterward, World War I broke out. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was also a member of the Young Turks. Leveraging the war, the Young Turks contributed to

the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, which ultimately split into 12 independent states.

During this period, the Greco-Turkish War lasted for four years. After Atatürk's victory over the Greeks, the Ottoman dynasty was officially dissolved, and Turkey was declared a republic. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk became the first President of the Republic of Turkey. Atatürk led Turkey for 15 years and implemented numerous reforms. Most notably, he declared Turkey a secular state, separating religion from politics. He closed religious schools (madrasas), replaced the Arabic script with the Latin alphabet, reformed surnames, and adopted the title "Atatürk" (Father of the Turks). Atatürk initiated the reconstruction of Turkey, laying the foundation for a modern, secular nation.

Based on an analysis of political and social processes in Iran during the first quarter of the 20th century, the following points can be highlighted:

At the age of 32, Reza Shah Pahlavi witnessed the triumph of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran (1911), which sought to limit the Shah's absolute power and establish constitutional governance. A National Assembly was formed, but the country did not prosper over the next 15 years. World War I brought significant hardships to the Iranian people, and the 1917 Russian Revolution also had a profound impact on Iran.

In this turbulent situation, Iran signed a 1919 agreement with Britain, which strengthened British influence in the country. Forces opposing the Shah utilized this environment to orchestrate a bloodless coup in 1920, ending the Qajar dynasty. Syyed Zia became Prime Minister, while Reza Khan was appointed Minister of Defense. However, Syyed Zia was unable to implement meaningful reforms for the country's progress, and the Shah's authority weakened further. Mounting expenses plunged the country into crisis.



The need for a strong leader became evident, and Ahmad Shah Qajar appointed Reza Khan as Prime Minister before leaving for France. Despite opposition from clerics, Reza Khan declared the establishment of a republic in the National Assembly and renamed himself Reza Shah Pahlavi, founding the Pahlavi dynasty.

Reza Shah initiated reforms to restore Iran's ancient glory, including Persianizing names, mandating the removal of hijabs from women, and modernizing the state and society. His goal was to create a modern, progressive, and powerful nation.

As noted, the aspirations of the leaders of Iran and Turkey during that era were similar, aiming to establish modern, secular, and strong states. Both leaders began significant political and economic reforms and achieved certain successes. Today, the outcomes of Atatürk's reforms in Turkey are evident, with the entire Turkish nation observing a moment of silence every year in his honor on the anniversary of his death.

However, the situation in modern Iran differs. Reza Shah's modernization efforts did not endure like those of Atatürk. Several factors may explain this, including the Iranian population's unpreparedness for modernization and the absence of the ethnic diversity seen in Turkey. One critical factor was the lack of tolerance in Reza Shah's policies. Modernization imposed through force was not well-received, as the Iranian people were not mentally prepared for such changes at the time. This situation empowered opposition forces (extremists) hostile to the Shah's policies, ultimately leading to a coup and revolution.

Although the future plans of both leaders were similar, they pursued different approaches in implementing their policies. As seen from the histories of these two countries, the principle of tolerance is one of the crucial factors in the development and progress of a society. The presence of tolerance within a society reflects the education, literacy, awareness, and broad

worldview of its people. Consequently, a society with informed and aware citizens is destined to thrive.

Conversely, in countries that remain underdeveloped today, the violation of tolerance principles often indicates the presence of societal limitations and fanaticism.

In recent years, the profound transformations in our country, driven by the wise policies of state leaders, have led to reforms in education and upbringing, efforts to raise the educational level of women, the strengthening of the rule of law, and the broadening of public perspectives. Initiatives to increase employment, particularly enhancing women's participation in society, and programs to combat poverty have significantly contributed to the spiritual enrichment of the population.

As a result, an enlightened society fully understands and embraces the principles of tolerance. It becomes more accepting of others' lifestyles, behaviors, customs, emotions, opinions, ideas, and beliefs. In such a society, historical mistakes are not repeated, paving the way for national development and progress.

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