



KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON THE THEME: 'TOLERANCE – AN INDISPENSABLE TOOL FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE' DELIVERED AT THE 37TH ANNUAL NATIONAL IJTEMA (RALLY) OF THE MAJLIS KHUDDAM-UL AHMADIYYA (AHMADIYYA MUSLIM YOUTH ORGANISATION) – GHANA BY MR AYYUB MORGAN (SECRETARY TA'LIM, AHMADIYYA MUSLIM MISSION, GHANA)

Respected Chairman, Alhaj Maulvi Mohammed Bin Salih, the Ameer & Missionary–In-Charge of Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, Ghana; The Honourable Western Regional Minister, Hon Paul Evans Aidoo; Distinguished Acting President of Western Regional House of Chiefs, Nana Kwesi Agyemang IX, Paramount Chief of Lower Dixcove; Distinguished Invited Guests, and Elders of Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission; Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media; Dedicated Members of Majlis Khuddam-ul Ahmadiyya, Ghana and their Foreign Delegates, Assalaamu Alaikum Warahmatullah Wabarakaatuh! (May the Peace and Blessings of Almighty Allah be upon us all).

It is my greatest pleasure, as former National secretary of the organization, to be given the opportunity to share my views on the theme “Tolerance – An indispensable tool for peaceful co-existence”, and to benefit from the blessings of this Ijtema, despite the short notice which I have managed to tolerate.

The holy prophet Mohammed ^(SAW) teaches that

“You do not do evil to those who do evil to you, but deal with them with forgiveness and kindness.”

He taught his followers to tolerate and respect adherents of other religious faiths, even the ardent critics and enemies of Islam.

For the youth, the theme is extremely important. The intolerance instinct commonly manifests in the youth, and diminishes in gravity with age and experience. For this reason, I would have asked for more time, if I had been informed earlier, to enable me deal with the topic exhaustively.

Furthermore, with the impending Presidential and Parliamentary polls in Ghana in December this year, there could be no better theme than this. I congratulate the organizers for their choice which will go a long way to create the peaceful atmosphere required for a successful election.

Ameer chairman, please permit me to bring to the notice of my audience an interesting fiction, full of wisdom and a food for thought. Some of you may have come across it on social media already. It goes like this:

In an ancient temple, a number of pigeons lived happily on the roof top.

When the renovation of the Temple began for the annual Temple Feast, the pigeons relocated themselves to a church nearby. The existing pigeons in the church accommodated the new comers very well.

When Christmas was approaching and the church was given a facelift, all the pigeons had to move out to look for another place. They were fortunate to find a place in a mosque nearby. The pigeons in the mosque welcomed them happily.

Later, Ramadan time came and the mosque was repainted. All the pigeons now came to the same ancient Temple.

One day the pigeons on top found some communal clashes below in a market square. The baby pigeon asked the mother pigeon "who are these people?" The mother replied, "they are Human Beings." The baby asked, "But why are they fighting with each other?"

The mother said, "These human beings going to the Temple are called 'Hindus' and the people going to the church are called 'Christians' and the people going to the mosque are called 'Muslims'.

The baby pigeon asked, "why is it so? When we were in the Temple we were called pigeons, when we were in the church we were called pigeons, and when we were in the mosque we were called pigeons. Similarly they should be called just 'Human Beings' wherever they go".

The mother pigeon said, "you and me, and other pigeon friends have experienced God, and that is why we are living here in the highly elevated place peacefully"

These people are yet to experience God. Hence they are living below us and fighting and killing each other when they are all human beings created by the same God who they all claim to serve. Perhaps there will be peace if they refer to themselves simply as human beings instead of seeing themselves as Hindus, Christians or Muslims.

Food for thought for all human beings. Even birds are tolerating each other, and co-existing peacefully. Why can't human beings, who claim to know God even better and are more spiritual, do as the birds or even do it better than the birds?

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Why can't we tolerate one another since intolerance breeds conflicts, disorder and insecurity?

With the prevailing religious and political climate globally therefore, the need for peaceful co-existence of all nations, religions, communities, groups and individuals has become more imperative than ever before.

Ameer chairman, religious, political, economic and social intolerance resulting from immorality and misconceptions largely explain many widespread conflicts, attacks, wars, terrorism, massive killings and destruction of property which take place in many parts of the world.

We need to remind ourselves that creation is characteristically heterogeneous, but the advantages of heterogeneity shall enhance rapid development if mankind would respect diversity, unite cooperatively, and co-exist peacefully. Otherwise the same phenomenon would potentially create division, misunderstanding and intolerance, and more negative tendencies.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you may agree with me that all true religions, by and large, seek to promote peaceful co-existence among its adherents, and among all men. Many nations have also adopted democratic principles of governance. These developments demand tolerance from all.

Yet, intolerance persists, and peaceful co-existence remains a mirage.

Consequently, the theme, "Tolerance – an Indispensable Tool for Peaceful Coexistence" for such a Programme for Ahmadi youth in Ghana at this time is indeed most appropriate. Tolerance is one of the key moral qualities/traits or tools required for promoting peace in the world. Frankly speaking, man cannot develop spiritually, morally and materially without tolerance. This explains the indispensability of tolerance.

Ameer chairman, I believe a definition of the word 'TOLERANCE' is essential to the on-going discussion.

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, "tolerance" is;

"the willingness to allow people to do, say, or believe what they want without criticising them or punishing them".

It also means;

REVIEWED

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"to be able to accept something unpleasant or difficult, even though you do not like it".

We also need to appreciate that 'Tolerance levels' differ from age to age, person to person, tribe to tribe, race to race, religion to religion, nation to nation, etc. What is tolerable to one may be intolerable to another depending upon social, religious, ethnic and hereditary backgrounds, as well as training.

The truth, Ladies and Gentlemen, as the adage goes, is that;

"If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient".

Conversely,

"If a child lives with criticism and hostility, he learns to condemn and to fight".

Tolerance manifests in patience, self-control and willingness to forgive, instead of condemnation, retaliation, confrontation wickedness and brutality. Indeed, my brethren, a true Muslim, and an Ahmadi for the matter, should be forbearing and avoid selective tolerance or tolerance of convenience.

According to Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad_{as} the Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi, the Holy Founder of Ahmadiyya community in Islam, the attributes of God teach us the lesson that we should behave magnanimously and kindly towards our fellow beings, and should not be petty of heart and illiberal. In his divine wisdom, other religions which follow such principles are essentially true religions, and their founders were most certainly prophets of God. The core message and objective of the promised Messiah is to unite mankind, promote peaceful co-existence, love for all, and hatred for none.

Therefore it behoves all of us, Muslims, Christians and all 'Human Beings' to tolerate one another since "to err is human", and "reciprocal tolerance" is essential and paramount.

Subjects must tolerate kings and vice versa. Citizens must tolerate their leaders and vice versa. Congregants/worshippers must tolerate their Imams/Pastors and vice versa. Students must tolerate teachers and vice versa. Son/daughter must tolerate father/mother and vice versa. Siblings must tolerate one another to promote peace in the home and family.

Above all, let us all promote inter-party/intra-party tolerance as well as inter/intra religious tolerance. Peaceful co-existence and national development are only achievable through tolerance of each other's views and excesses. Let us love all, and hate none as Ahmadiyya advocates.

Ameer sahib, since majority of our youth are students, kindly permit me to make special appeal to them and to all stakeholders in educational institutions to endeavour to show tolerance in the performance of their duties. Students must be respectful, studious, and help to create peaceful and conducive academic atmosphere. Teachers and management must respect opinions of students, tolerate students with special needs and show moderation in disciplining offenders. This is the basis for holistic training and development of the youth.

"Occupational tolerance" requires that workers tolerate colleagues and management to enhance industrial peace and harmony at the workplace to promote higher productivity.

It is absolutely necessary for father, mother, teacher, religious leader, politician, traditional ruler, etc. to be positive role models in the practice of tolerance.

Ladies and Gentlemen, kindly support me to appeal to members of the Majlis Khuddam-ul Ahmadiyya to portray tolerance as espoused by Islam. At the same time, you must educate members to avoid provocative acts beyond tolerable limits. The following relevant quotations from the Holy Quran offer sufficient guidance.

"Those, who spend in prosperity and adversity, and those who suppress anger, and pardon men; and Allah loves those who do good" [3:135].

"Do thou ever forbear, O Prophet! And enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant" [7:200].

"And good and evil are not alike. Repel evil with that which is best. And lo, he, between whom and thyself was enmity, will become as though he were a warm friend" [41:35-36]

"And he who is patient and forgives – that, surely, is a matter of high resolve" [42-44]

"And, surely, on thee shall be My curse till the Day of Judgement" [15:36]

"...Let them forgive and forbear. Do you not desire that Allah should forgive you?" [24:23]

Ameer Chairman, the youth who are particularly prone to intolerance must always remember that the Holy prophet_{sa}

“always held himself under complete control. Even when he became a sovereign he always listened to everybody with patience, and if a person treated him with impertinence he bore with him and never attempted any retaliation”.

After years of being oppressed and persecuted by non-Muslims, the Holy Prophet_{sa} treated them with extraordinary forgiveness when he overcame them. Once, the Prophet gave out his own valuable gown to be used to wrap the body of one of his bitterest enemies when he died, and personally led his funeral service. He was known to have prayed for his enemies always.

All members of Majlis Khuddam-ul Ahmadiyya shall therefore be expected to emulate this moral quality of the Holy Prophet Muhammad_{sa}. Other explicit Islamic teachings on gentleness, forbearance, forgiveness, endurance of hurt and dialogue which are necessarily an extension of tolerance can be found in numerous Ahadith.

For want of time however, I will read only two for now, but I entreat you to carefully dissect the ‘Gardens of the Righteous’ authored by Sir Mohammed Zaffrullah Khan for further knowledge and guidance.

- Ayesha relates that the Holy Prophetsa said :
Allah is Gentle and loves gentleness and bestows upon gentleness that which he does not bestow upon harshness or anything else.
- Abu Hurairah_{ra} relates that a rustic passed water in the mosque and some people got up to rough-handle him, whereupon the Holy Prophet_{sa} said. Let go of him 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)

In connection with the narrations and illustrations about Islamic teachings on tolerance and related moral qualities, I crave your indulgence to patiently listen to the following audio recording. It is an address delivered on a similar theme by one Dr. Craig Considine as a guest at the 68th Annual Jalsa Salana of Ahmadiyya community in the USA held from Friday, July 29 to Sunday, July 31. Co-incidentally USA is also holding elections this year.

[<https://www.facebook.com/AuthorQasimRashid/videos/1091443624283723/>]

In conclusion, Ameer chairman, I am convinced that one can say confidently that Tolerance is the key, an indispensable tool or *si-nequanon* for violence-free elections in December 2016 and beyond.

We are already experiencing unpleasant political outbursts which point to possible chaos before, during, and after the elections if Ghanaians don't tolerate one another. The realistic antidote is Tolerance in all its ramifications. Politicians must educate their followers to be peace-loving, and truly and whole-heartedly tolerate opposing views while refraining from insults in their campaigns. All politicians must embrace inter-party dialogue, commitment and engagement.

Religious leaders cannot be tired of admonishing **goodness, patience, togetherness, forgiveness and avoidance of extremism** among the entire citizenry.

In this respect, Ahmadi youth are in a better position to set good examples for other Ghanaians to follow. Don't ever forget "**Love for all, hatred for none**", our motto. Eschew electoral and religious violence. Preach peaceful and harmonious co-existence of all Ghanaians. Never cease praying for peaceful elections. Pursue politics along Ahmadiyya principles to ensure absolute peace in Ghana.

In connection with this crusade, Ameer Sahib, it is incumbent, no doubt, upon all those who, by nature, are intolerant to be helped to get healing or counselling.

Without attempting to prescribe a comprehensive therapy on Tolerance, it will be useful to be guided by the following tips for peace to prevail all the time.

1. Don't react to situations without thinking and rethinking
2. Never reply/make a decision when you are angry/sad
3. Take a deep breath and drink cold water to overcome anger
4. Pause and ponder over harmful consequences of intended harsh decision/action
5. Improve your tolerance level through prayer, humility, sacrifice and love
6. Even where you are right, accept guilt if the wrongdoer fails to confess, just for the sake of peace
7. Forgive quickly
8. Frown less, smile more

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9. Talk less, listen more
10. Judge less, accept more
11. Complain less, appreciate more
12. Accommodate other people's foolishness
13. Don't interfere in someone's affairs. No gossip
14. Be a peace-lover and compassionate, harm no one
15. Tolerate diversity
16. Practice and encourage pluralism
17. Promote Dialogue, Education, understanding commitment, Engagement
18. Google Tolerance therapy for more information
19. Executives of Majlis to consider workshop on Tolerance and emotional intelligence by an experienced clinical psychologist. It must include a presentation on "Tolerance in marriage" – very important
20. Use this occasion to deliberate and exchange ideas on ways of promoting peaceful co-existence through Tolerance.

Thank you for tolerating my views on the theme as I have briefly expressed. May Allah bless whoever has listened to me, and make us Tolerant all the time.

ASSALAAMU ALAIKUM.

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