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<b>Article:</b>	<b>Qualitative Study on Religious Education and Tolerance as a Key for Social Development</b>
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### ABSTRACT

Varied characteristics and elements combine together to form a social structure of our society, which is why it is unique in nature and as a result, every human tend to be unique and individual personality. These human attributes becomes the foundation of the society and moral and ethical values are based on tolerance, harmony, peace, loyalty and sincerity. Among all these traits tolerance is of prime importance and due to globalization it has gained more significance. People from different communities follow different religion and due to diversity of culture they have different life-style, but still they share common social and economic scenario, which helps in forming tolerance oriented society. Qualitative research method was chosen to conduct in-depth study through content analysis by using library research method. According to the qualitative analysis it has been concluded that today world is focusing on religious tolerance and promotion of pluralistic society. This is a very practical approach to avoid religious conflicts and to develop a peaceful society for social development by raising awareness.

**Key Words:** Religious education, Tolerance, Social development, Peaceful society.

کلیدی الفاظ: مذہبی تعلیم، رواداری، معاشرتی ترقی، پر امن معاشرہ۔

### تلخیص

ہمارے معاشرے کا سماجی ڈھانچہ مختلف عناصر اور خصوصیات کی بنیاد پر تشکیل دیا گیا ہے، جو فطرت میں منفرد ہے اور ہر فرد بحیثیت انسان، منفرد شخصیت کا مالک ہے۔ ان انسانی صفات کا مقصد ایک ایسے معاشرے کی بنیاد رکھنا ہے جس کی اخلاقی اقدار، وفاداری، اخلاص، رواداری، امن اور ہم آہنگی پر مبنی ہوں۔ ان خصوصیات میں رواداری سب سے زیادہ اہمیت کی حامل ہے، کیونکہ آج عالمگیریت کی وجہ سے دنیا سمٹ گئی ہے۔ مختلف مذاہب، پس منظر اور ثقافتوں سے تعلق رکھنے والے لوگ مختلف طرز زندگی رکھتے ہیں، لیکن وہ کچھ مشترکہ سماجی و اقتصادی صفات کا اشتراک کرتے ہیں، اس طرح دنیا کو مزید متنوع اور کثیر ثقافتی بناتے ہیں۔ مشترکہ ثقافتی خصوصیات کا اشتراک زیادہ تر رواداری پر مبنی اور ہم آہنگ معاشرہ قائم کرتا ہے اور اسے فروغ دیتا ہے۔ بنیادی طور پر تمام مذاہب رواداری کو فروغ دیتے ہیں اور ہر مذہب کا احترام مساوی معاشرے کو برقرار رکھنے کی کلید ہے۔ اپنے مذہبی عقیدے کے مطابق عبادت کرنے کی آزادی سے لطف اندوز ہونا ہر انسان کا بنیادی حق سمجھا جانا چاہیے، کیونکہ اس سے معاشرہ کشمکش اور لڑائیوں کا باعث بن سکتا ہے۔ اسلام ہم سب کو رواداری اور امن کے تناظر میں مذہبی آزادی سے لطف اندوز ہونے کا درس دیتا ہے۔ قرآن پاک کی سورۃ البقرہ آیت نمبر 256 میں واضح طور پر ارشاد ہے کہ ”دین کے قبول کرنے میں کوئی جبر نہیں ہوگا۔ صحیح راستہ غلط راستہ واضح کر دیا گیا ہے۔“ یہ اسلامی تعلیم ہمارے لیے ہے کہ ہم اس کی تعریف کرنے کے بجائے اس پر عمل کریں۔ اس مطالعے کا بنیادی مقصد اس بات کا جائزہ لینا ہے کہ انسانی معاشروں نے ان سماجی صفات کے مطابق کس طرح ترقی کی ہے۔ لائبریری ریسرچ کے طریقہ کار کا استعمال کرتے ہوئے مواد کے تجزیہ کے ذریعے گہرائی سے مطالعہ کرنے کے لیے کیفیتی تحقیق کا طریقہ منتخب کیا گیا ہے۔ معیار کے تجزیے کے مطابق یہ نتیجہ اخذ کیا گیا ہے کہ آج دنیا مذہبی رواداری اور کشمیری معاشرے کے فروغ پر توجہ دے رہی ہے۔ مذہبی تنازعات سے بچنے اور سماجی ترقی کے لیے ایک پر امن معاشرے کی تشکیل کے لیے یہ ایک بہت ہی عملی طریقہ ہے۔ مطالعہ مذہبی عدم برداشت کے نتائج اور اس کے نتائج پر بھی توجہ مرکوز کرتا ہے۔ سماجی ترقی سماجی بیداری اور روشن خیالی اور اخلاقی اقدار کی اصلاح کر کے ہر فرد کو معاشرے کا ایک اہم اور نتیجہ خیز حصہ سمجھ کر حاصل کی جاسکتی ہے۔

## INTRODUCTION

*“The Highest Result of Education is Tolerance -  
Helen Keller (1880 - 1968) ”.*

Human civilizations are formed by groups of individuals, bearing different characteristics based on ethnicity, caste, beliefs, norms, values and customs and culture. These characteristics and traits make us all different from each other and they design the shape of societies. The betterment of the society is based on the loyalty, sincerity and togetherness, as these characteristics are the true essence of a prosperous society (James & Meining, 1971). Among all these characteristics tolerance is the key aspect of the society. Today world has become much smaller due to globalization and as a result the international borders have blurred. Now people feel more close to each other in terms of religion, culture, nation and life style, thus making world more diverse and multicultural, therefore the idea of establishing harmonious and tolerance based society has become more important than ever before (Finley, 2014). Tolerance is not only a social aspect, but it is also a very important religious aspect as well, because religious beliefs, practices and worship are a very personal and sacred issue. And if anyone bashes one’s religion then it can create a hatred battle whose consequences can be uncontrollable. If tolerance is practiced then there would be less global conflicts in the name of religion. Religious freedom and tolerance are part of Islamic teaching and they are inseparable, i.e. everyone must practice Islam according to the Islamic teachings. The Holy Quran clearly states that every individual’s conscience is linked with religion. In Surah 2: Ayah 256, it is stated that:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۗ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ  
بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ أَسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ -

“There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing” (Al-Quran, 2:256).

Tolerance is defined as showing patience, accessibility and living together peacefully and it helps in maintaining peace so that people can live a prosperous life socially, morally, financially and emotionally. Tolerance is a way to harmonize the society, thus making everyone feels respected and secured, because it is important for a healthy and liberal society, where all can have their own ideas to follow their own dreams and thoughts (Hayden, & Thompson, 2013). And for that we have to accept every single being in a society as our own (Fletcher, 1966). Islam is a religion of peace, hence it teaches elimination of religious prejudice and hatred

and it provides freedom to all to practice their religion as well. Similarly like Islam, other religions also teach moral values and regulations to lead a daily life (Burdbar, & Nisar, 2012). Many research shows that education is the most effective way to cultivate a harmonious society (UNESCO, 2014), and to eliminate the stereotypical social practices and ideas (Scheiner, 2015). In addition it is also believed that religious literacy can foster religious tolerance in the society and religious literacy is defined as the skill to distinguish and understand the social life, political life and cultural life through different perspectives (Moore, 2007). We can educate our youth and children by teaching them religion in the context of tolerance, peace and harmony in order to avoid any type of cultural and religious conflicts (Miedema, & Bertram-Troost, 2008).

Religious education plays important role in sustainable development in all sectors, for instance, economy, education, social and political domain and moral gain as well and it helps in meeting various challenges. Mordi has observed that due to lack of political will and insincerity, corruption and poorly implemented policies development projects do not achieve the targets and goals (Mordi, 2015). Similarly Uche argues that corruption is the main cause of the failure of the development strategies (Uche, 2010). Omoregbe, describes that number of crisis and lack of public-private partnership has slowed down the development pace Ornoregbe (1993), and many countries have suffered due to negligence at this level (Achebe, 1983). Lack of religious education and awareness of human rights has also caused conflicts and as a result social chaos and imbalance Nwachukwu (2008), thus leaving communities in a crisis situation (Uche, 2011). It is an established fact and various researchers have also identified that without religious education sustainable development and peace cannot be achieved. Today the world face a challenge to initiate institutional capacity to sustain development and to transform and reconcile social structure through social enlightenment, religious education and awareness along with ideology based on peace.

## **Theoretical Background**

### **Misconceptions and Elusiveness of Tolerance**

Previous researches during last decade have revealed the misconceptions and elusiveness of tolerance in the society (Dennett, 2006). It has very diverse meaning and is linked with all social and religious aspect. In fact the terminologies elusiveness and tolerance are often used in the same meaning to highlight social and religious issues. The terms discrimination and tolerance are used globally in the same context internationally even in the human rights documents (Rangus, 2001). Socially these concepts have gained so much importance that even at academic level diversity of religious tolerance have been emphasized (Sardoc, 2010). Need for understanding the significance of tolerance has also increased due to the increase of crime rate in all parts of the world (Schweitzer, 2007).

## **Modern Liberal Views of Tolerance**

The idea of tolerance born in those societies, where claims of a single way of life were not appreciated and it cannot guide us how to harbor different ways of life and concept of living together. We have to analyze how tolerance can prevail and in better way among liberal and diverse societies Gray (2009), because industrialization and advancement of technology emphasize more on individualism rather than groups. Thus as a result human rights are also constructed in the same scenario (Angus, 2004). Many social scientists emphasize that we should revise the liberal tolerance concept and can promote collectivism rather than individualism (Gray, 2009). Tolerance in society gives rise to a healthy atmosphere or arguments and reasoning based on honesty (Walzer, 1997).

## **Tolerance Based Decision Making and Ethical Behaviour**

Tolerance teaches a person, how to behave in a humanistic society and trains human mind to work against their desire in a way that no other person can be harmed. It relates to the deviation from typical standards, values and principles based on a person's desires (Lusenga, 2010). Lusenga argues that these norms and values guides a person to make choices and to make decisions in a given situation and these principles can be both explicit and implicit based on the usability, significance and desires of a person. Similarly Morton, claims that decision making is based on one's preferences, likes and dislikes, which maybe sometimes influenced by others behaviours (Morton, 1998). The world should now focus on preferences to live differently, but to strive towards a better peaceful life (Gray, 2009). A tolerant person always respects other humans within the society and strives to flourish in healthy environment (Grayling, 2002). Tolerance is not just a social practice it is a social concept that deals with the mental construct and it also focuses on philosophical reflection of the society (De Botton, 2012).

## **Review Literature**

*“What exactly do we mean by human and social development?”*

This is a key question which should be interpreted properly and people have different perceptions and can answer differently based on their expertise and concepts. Many people can relate human development to freedom, justice, equity and equality, access to resources and opportunities, self-fulfillment, contentment and prosperity, whereas others can have different idea depending on their global view and these ideas and concepts about human and social development stems out of societal beliefs, values and norms. The global perspective and local communities also shapes the ethics, morals, development ideas and norms of the societies.

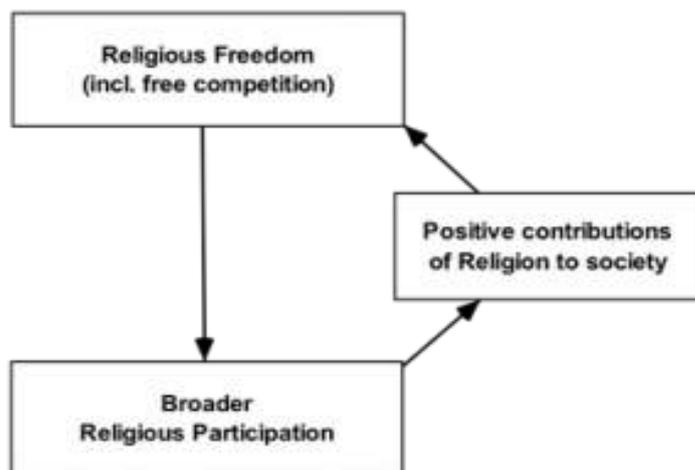
It is important to realize that without focusing on religious beliefs, spiritual role and humanity we cannot attain and sustain development. Religious beliefs and faith defines the human and social development purposefully and the Islamic faith clearly explains the concepts e:g, in Quran the purpose of human life is defined as worship of God, so that we learn to manage

our life and social matters (Al-Quran, 51:56). And Quran clearly indicates that world is just diversion and amusement, one should not indulge in worldly matters so much that it causes diversion from religious path (Al-Quran, 29:64). It is an established fact that Allah is the finality and the real measure of human actions and progress is done in the light of Quran (Al-Quran, 53:42). In Surah 28: Ayah 79-90, Quran clearly states that:

*"Oh, would that we had like what was given to Qārūn; indeed, he is one of great fortune." But those who had been given knowledge said, "Woe to you! The reward of God is better for he who believes and does righteousness; And none are granted it except the patient" (Al-Quran, verses 28:79–80).*

Allah has clearly stated in the above Ayah that human development can only be truly based on Islamic ideology and through following the righteous actions and thus it lasts in the form of rewards (Al-Quran, 18:104). More specifically religion enlightens the way of living and teaches us the ethics and morals, which helps us in attaining purposeful life (Freedom of Religion, (<https://law.jrank.org>)). Few questions have been raised by UN Human Rights Council are as follows:

- I. What impact can religious intolerance have on societies (e.g. socio-economic development)?
- II. How important is it to have good numbers – data – when trying to understand issues around freedom of religion or belief?
- III. What does freedom of religion or belief actually look like in society? How can we recognize it?



Religious Freedom Cycle (Grim, 2014).

- I. **What impact can religious intolerance have on societies (e.g. socio-economic development)?**

First we must understand the dimensions and sources of religious intolerance, which can be government policies and actions and actions and beliefs of an individual and groups in the society. According to the findings of various researches government should protect and respect the religious freedom of all religious groups including minorities and should build harassment and bias free societies to prevail peace and tolerance at all societal levels. By appropriate steps of government grievances reduces, which is the main cause of religious intolerance and violence. And high religious tolerance can be a main driver of economic sustainability.

## **II. How important is it to have good numbers – data – when trying to understand issues around freedom of religion or belief?**

It is very important to have comprehensive data in order to understand issues linked with religious intolerance and data collection is based on careful data collection and its analysis, which authenticates the actual facts and ideas to have clear picture of the issue. Without having empirical evidences we will be just having general discussions and our personal opinions, which cannot lead us to any conclusion.

## **III. What does freedom of religion or belief actually look like in society? How can we recognize it?**

Recognizing freedom of religion and belief is important, because it promotes peace and stability in the society. And religious education also plays a very important role in national development. The religious education not only grooms our personality as a human but it also creates sense of sacred among humans and makes them more civilized. Freedom of religion and belief is essential to maintain peace and harmony in the society and it builds relationship not only between God and man but also between man and society, therefore we can say that freedom of religion and belief is the key to development (Iwenoft, 2010).

Sociologists have been trying to understand the meaning of life for centuries and many philosophers believe that religion is a basic pillar of any human society; therefore, one must study religion in order to understand the actual reasons of social conflicts. According to Emile Durkheim religion is a unified belief system which unites communities together (Durkheim, 1947). Religion describes several systems of faith Durkheim (1915), practice and belief, which further elaborates about people's concepts of spirituality (Fasching & Dell, 2001). Sociologists have conducted various researches to understand and distinguish between various terminologies e.g. beliefs, experience, practice, faith, rituals and preaching, because without the understanding of these terms one cannot make out the actual spirit of religion (Barkan & Greenwood, 2003).

### **Objectives**

The main aspect of this research is to explore the assumption that religious tolerance can be attained through proper religious education. And the key objective is to educate and aware people about the importance of tolerance and the emphasis is on the inclusion of religious

education at school level. The curriculum should be designed in a way that every child should be educated about the true spirit of religion. Through educating religion to children we can prepare them to have a better and equitable life in future and can make them identify challenges and possibilities along with limitations. The best way to have a tolerant society is to respect others feelings and their opinion and to hold back their grudges. Therefore the main objective is to create an environment that helps to understand others perspectives and this way conflicts can be avoided.

### **Methodology**

This research has focused on qualitative methods by exploring the importance of religious education and tolerance as a key of social development, regarding world peace by using various qualitative research techniques to establish an in-depth understanding regarding the people's perspective about religion and world peace. For this purpose library research and content analysis method has been chosen to analyze every possible detail to cover all the aspects of the research problem and the material for the research has been collected from different libraries, newspapers and websites. This study examines the new dimension of religious education and peace, and it also attempts to capture in-depth understanding based on available literature about its importance of tolerance for social development. Thus, the researcher have focused on detailed study on the subject through qualitative research method and the information is collected for further analysis.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study presents the qualitative analysis regarding the importance of religious education and tolerance as a key of social development in maintaining world peace and humanity in the society by exploring its exclusive dimensions, which is not fully explored, because there is no sufficient research work done regarding the significance of religious education in maintaining world peace.

**Conclusions**

“Freedom of religion and school education is a multifaceted issue that entails significant opportunities as well as far-reaching challenges.” - Heiner Bielefeldt, (2010).

This study focuses on the need and importance of religious education for social balance and tolerance in the society at all level. This study also emphasized on the fact that religious education at school level will also help in a long run to eliminate negative stereotypes in the society by stimulating religious knowledge among students by raising their religiosity level and awareness. The key question in order to seek the required results arises that are we teaching our youth about the diversity in religious and global traditions. Religious literacy among youth is necessary and developing true religious awareness among children and overall in general public to create a tolerant society. Countries should focus on making religious education inclusive and to identify the significance and position of religion in education overall. Religious beliefs and faith are the most essential part of our life and religion holds special place in the hearts of people. Religion also holds important place in education and political domain and religious education is considered as agent of orientation and healthy discussion in an ideological society. Religious education and religious tolerance has a very deep connection as the social structure is based on certain beliefs and faith system. Conducting researches in this regard can help people understanding the concepts of tolerance and its importance. Understanding tolerance can develop awareness about patience and acceptance, which is the true essence of religion i.e. maintaining a harmonious society. This study aims to establish the awareness about important features of tolerance based on religious teachings and education among educationists as well, because awareness raising among educators enhances communication and teaching skills to help younger people in understanding and guiding them to adopt balanced life and to have peaceful living in the future. It is also noticed that religion is used many times to gain political and economic benefits and political hostility has divided people creating disconnection between people and society. Globally we see that this kind of manipulation of religious beliefs impacts our culture, norms, values and morals. This religious hostility has confused Muslim youth and their religious thoughts. Therefore it is highly needed to fill up the gap by building strong relationship between Muslims and religion, because only this way we can maintain social harmony and peace within and outside the society, thus as a result a balanced and peaceful society can be promoted. Religious education not only shapes our ideology but it also establishes harmonious society based on moral and ethical values and it is not a difficult task and it can be achieved through global peace.

**Recommendations**

To highlight the importance of religious education and tolerance as a key of social development extensive studies are required to examine the global perception. Following are the recommendations incorporated in this study. Contemporary policies should be designed in a manner to prepare students to live peacefully in a pluralistic society. These policies should strengthen people’s perceptions about reality of life and understanding of others rights and should also ensure the respect of diversity and acceptance in order to eliminate stereotypical social ideas to harbor peace and tolerance in the society.

1. Realizing the importance of religious education in public domain should be taken seriously and should be taught accordingly.
2. Dissemination of religious education and realizing the importance of tolerance at academic level is the responsibility of teachers, thus teachers; especially religious teachers should play their role with full potential.
3. Religious teachers should also be professional and should have sufficient knowledge and skills to teach students and raising awareness among people properly.
4. School curriculum should be evaluated properly to eliminate intolerance and discrimination at all social levels.
5. Advisory bodies and stakeholders should play balanced and impartial role in revising and developing school curriculum and revisiting teaching methods.

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