

IS RELIGIONS PEACEFUL OR VIOLENT AGENT OF CONFLICT?

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Religion is the guidance of Almighty God to human being which leads human society towards piety, virtue and purity of belief, action and purpose based on divine programme. All religions scripture and sources have a broad range of cultural and social value and resources that form the basis of personal attitude which prevent and successfully manage any conflict within or among the religions. These values are including mercy, kindness, justice, fraternity, tolerance and respect of humanity.

When the atrocities of Qur-aish against Muslim escalated, the Prophet-peace be upon him- advised his companions to migrate to the Christians kingdom of Abyssinia saying that “... *you will find there a King under whom none suffers injustice*”. Negus refused to deliver the Muslim migrants when Qur-aish demanded their deportation.

The prophet - peace be upon him- also sought to establish friendly relatives between the Muslim and Jews of Medina. He made a covenant of mutual obligation forming them into a single community but allowing for different between the two religions. There are plenty of examples which show followers and /or leaders of different religions and faith working or staying together for decades and centuries without any serious inter-religious conflict.

Contemporary world has many national and international interfaith bodies, which are apparently have done wonderful tasks in various field including health, humanitarian assistance, politics, peace and so forth. According to Nyerere, “..*Largely political and religious conflicts have been avoided in Tanzania not least because Muslim has set national interest ahead*”. This is tolerance which can be effective when each party have knowledge of the other and provide the ground for dialogue in a kindest manner and mutual respect as explained by the principles and wisdoms of religions.

Muslims throughout the history are aware of the verse number 217 of chapter 2 “...*They will never cease fighting until turn you back from your faith if they can...*” Also, even some Christians claim that Islam come by sword and “*he who came by sword shall perish by sword*” Matthew 26:56, their pious scholars have been emphasizing peace and justice to all human being regardless their religion, gender, age, race and nationality.

The believers of the religions are responsible to god in all aspects of activities of life and obliged to preserve the development efforts according to their capabilities. Thus interpreters and the scholars of individual religions have interpreted and reinterpreted their religious teaching according their interest and the needs of different time. They resulted to have numerous sects in each religion and each one claims to be the true religion or sect. This was resulted by personal or group interests, passion, superstition, blind imitation of creeds and theological formulae adhered to instead of the divine values. Thus bigotry, hatred, prejudice, mistrust, strife and rivalry prevail

and each one sees him self as universalistic religion intend for the entire human race. They therefore, caught up in competitive proselytism, evangelism and other political, social and economic interest.

Having gone in religions teaching Allah says “*Say: O people of scripture ye have no reliable faith until you observe the Torah and Evangel and that which has been sent down to you from your Lord*” (5:68). He also says “*..follow no the passion of thy soul lest it cause thee to miss the sign of Allah*”(26:38). These teachings have similar meaning with Isaiah 59:1-15, Matthew 7: 21 – 23, Mathew 7:26 -27 and Romans 6:23.

A culsory translations and the soul’s inclination to evil have caused intra and interreligions conflicts. Conflicts between caliphate Ali and mother of the believers Aisha, caliphate Ali and Muawiya in Swifin, Iran – Iraq war (1980 – 1988), Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other conflicts which represent a long term rivalry between Sunni and Shiite Muslim for hegemonic influence over the region. Also, thirty years war (1618-1648) sparked by religions differences and devastated central Europe, Inquisition and Northern Ireland conflict between Anglican and Catholic. The some could be argued in crusade and many other inter religious conflict. Actually, religions were corrupted to gain other interest.

Based on the above illustration we can conclude that the nature of religions whether individuals or relate to another are peaceful, it is only when corrupted or influenced by other economic, social or political factors they may become agents of conflict.