

## The world needs more Tolerance

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“Tolerance is the only real test of civilization”. It was Arthur Kelps who thus extolled the virtue of tolerance. Man in the 21<sup>st</sup> century believes he is more civilized than his ancestors. But is he also more tolerant than them? Unfortunately, the virtue of tolerance is not abundant in the world of today and the world is in dire need of it.

Tolerance can be defined as the possession of a fair and objective perspective and attitude towards those people who are of different races, religions, nations or have a set of opinions, beliefs and ideas the differ from our own.

The importance of tolerance lies in its ability to make a human being broad enough in mind to be receptive to all kinds of ideas. This, in turn, enables one to widen one’s knowledge and exercise more freedom of choice and judgment for oneself. At the same time it creates a deeper understanding of other’s views and beliefs.

Today, tolerance seems to be at a discount at all levels. At the most trivial sign of disagreement hot words are exchanged, almost immediately escalating into a fight and sometimes even murder. Family members find it difficult to put up with one another’s shortcomings – after all which human being is perfect? Communities, social groups, facial groups and nations- at all levels, there appears to be an acute lack of tolerance. Trivial misunderstandings, even rumors, give rise to riots with the accompanying bloodshed and permanent acres on relationship; at the national level, there is civil war and border wars. So often a personal matter such as religion has been distorted to create hatred amongst peoples. If people learnt to tolerate one another’s views, perhaps such sad occurrences could be reduced if not totally removed from this world!

Why has tolerance level come down? Or, indeed, has it come down at all? Human beings all through the ages have shown intolerance of views and beliefs and customs alien to their own. Wars such as the Crusades have been fought because of religious intolerance. Racial tension has grown due to intolerance. So long as human beings give in to envy, malice, jealousy and greed, tolerance will suffer. In rent times several longstanding and accepted social institution have shown signs of crumbling. Family values, social values are all being eroded. An increasing materialistic and consumer culture has not helped to nurture essential values. The individual has assumed such importance that anything that militates against that individual’s own ideas is not collated.

Enlightenment of individual is necessary. Universal values of liberalism, the willingness to listen to others, at most agree to disagree and not enter into fights

of domination – these qualities have to be bred at every level of society. Democracy, after all, means tolerance of dissent; if this tolerance is not imbibed and nurtured, it will only give rise to another Bosnia, Chechnya or Kashmir.