Religious Tolerance in Malaysia: Problems and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Every religion is normally perceived from their own religion to tend toward exclusiveness by claiming that their religion is the only true religion, offering the true revelation and the true way of salvation. This exclusiveness started with desire to know the religious status or truth position among other religions. The question on which religion is the ideal religion and ultimately the truest one has always been raised and debated among people of religions. This polemic can be a seed of many conflicts and disagreements between religions in many parts of the world, including Malaysia as a multi-religious country. This is a preliminary study which attempts to explore issues and challenges pertaining to religious tolerance as practiced in Malaysia. This research is a qualitative research which data are gathered from various sources including books, journals, magazines, newspapers, articles and internet sources related to the topic as well as in depth interview with qualified persons. The data will then be analysed using document analysis method. The result shows that religious tolerance in this country is seen working under various and distinctive understanding. The main challenges to practising religious tolerance in Malaysia emerged from none guidance module to practising religious tolerance especially which stated the limitation and the rule in religious tolerance applicable in Malaysia context and lack of understanding of religious tolerance needed within adherents of religion which cause prejudices against the adherents of religions.

Keyword: religions in Malaysia, religious pluralism, religious tolerance, toleration

It is obviously seen that there is a struggle in the claims of religious tolerance in this 21st century AD which is equivalent to the fourteen year of the Hijrah. Claims are fought among the adherents of religions who are seeking for guidance to live in peace and harmony and also to have a mutual understanding for living together. Claims and struggles in the religious tolerance have been questioned by many either individually or in group and organization. Hence, it has also happened in Malaysia as a country with people of different religions. It always seem to promise good advantages but yet still to have some drawbacks. However, it is upon the believers of different religions to set a benchmark in producing a positive outcome or vice versa.

The Concept of Tolerance

The literal and lexical meaning of tolerance means to bear, to endure or to put up with. Tolerance comes from Latin, toleransia which means flexibility, softness of the heart, broadmindedness and volunteering (Abdul Halim 2008; Jaffary 2003:77). Abdul Halim (2008) explains that tolerance is equivalent to being positive and appreciating others in the frame of

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