

# Value of Tolerance and its Importance on the Principle and Practice of Democracy

**Atasi Mahapatra**

*Assistant professor,*

*Sahid Matangini Hazra Govt. College for women,*

*Chaksrikrishnapur, kulberia, Purbe medinipur, W. B.*

*atasimahapatra2011@gmail.com*

## **Abstract:**

*Democracy is government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all citizens, directly or through their freely elected representatives. Tolerance is the very important of democratic society. Democracy, as an ideal, upholds that the member of the society should each other, and be treated, as equal. In pluralist democratic society, there are different views, on question of politics, morality, religion and this leads to a good and meaningful life. Political tolerance is a key principle of democracy. A liberal democracy recognises the individual's rights to liberty and other rights that are based on importance of liberty. J. S. Mill's work, "On Liberty" mark the beginning the idea of toleration. Individual liberty will involve tolerance of the majority which has social and political power to act on this opposition. Many philosopher argues that tolerance is also becomes the virtue that characterizes a pluralist liberal democracy. Standard assumptions about tolerance are tested, such as influence of literacy, class, gender, membership in civic organisations, levels of social capital, interpersonal trust, and religious and political affiliation. Without tolerance, such a society is not possible. In pursuit of this we have also developed new and more refined ways of measuring tolerance and the factors that may determine variations in the levels of it. In democratic society, every citizen has a responsibility to practice political tolerance in their word and actions. In today's world, we must be tolerant.*

**Keywords:** *citizen; democratic society; political tolerance; representative; responsibility.*

## **1. Introduction**

Tolerance is very important of our generation now a day. Popularly tolerance is perceived as an attitude that implies acceptance of differences in belief and life style and civilized behaviour with others people. In democratic societies to determines the level of tolerance and intolerance among citizen who lives in area where exist different economies prosperity or different position on the continuum from authoritarian rule of democracy. The standard assumption about tolerance are rest, such as these relating to the influence of literacy, class, gender, membership of the civic organisations, levels of social capital,

interpersonal trust, religious and political affiliation, level of democratic performances etc. We have to explore a number of new hypothesis which makes individual as well as societies more tolerant. So the issue of tolerance and intolerance are very much on national and global agenda.

## 2. Objectives

- To acquaint the ideas of tolerance in briefly.
- To discuss the democratic principle and relation with tolerance in society.
- To explain impact of tolerance in practice of democracy.
- To analysis the importance of tolerance in social, moral and political life of human beings.

## 3. Methodology

The present paper is focuses on the value of tolerance and its importance of both principle and practices of democracy. Using the analytical method, this course is discussing concept of democracy and its principle. It is also discuss nature, justification, importance of tolerance and its implication in democratic societies. It examines tolerance both as it has been understood by political philosophers and as it is understood by citizens at large.

## 4. Discussion and its results

### 4.1. Overview of democracy and its principles

Democracy comes from the Greek word, “demos,” meaning people. In democracies, it is the people who hold sovereign power over legislator and government. Although nuances apply to the world's various democracies, certain principles and practices distinguish democratic government from other forms of government. It is a set of principles and practices that protect human freedom; it is the institutionalization of freedom. It also rests upon the principles of majority rule, coupled with individual and minority rights. All democracies, while respecting the will of the majority, zealously protect the fundamental rights of individuals and minority groups.<sup>[1]</sup> Democracies guard against all-powerful central governments and decentralize government to regional and local levels, understanding that local government must be as accessible and responsive to the people as possible. Democracies understand that one of their prime functions is to protect such basic human rights as freedom of speech and religion; the right to equal protection under law; and the opportunity to organize and participate fully in the political, economic, and cultural life of society.<sup>[2]</sup> Democracies conduct regular free and fair elections open to all citizens. Elections in a democracy cannot be facades that dictators or a single party hide behind, but authentic competitions for the support of the people. Democracy subjects governments to the rule of law and ensures that all citizens receive equal protection under the law and that their rights

are protected by the legal system. Democracies are diverse, reflecting each nation's unique political, social, and cultural life. Democracies rest upon fundamental principles, not uniform practices. Citizens in a democracy not only have rights, they have the responsibility to participate in the political system that, in turn, protects their rights and freedoms. Democratic societies are committed to the values of tolerance, cooperation, and compromise. Democracies recognize that reaching consensus requires compromise and that it may not always be attainable.

#### **4.2. Basic form of democracy**

Democracy has taken a number of forms, both in theory and practice. Some varieties of democracy provide better representation and more freedom for their citizens than others. Several variants of democracy exist, but there are two basic forms, both of which concern how the whole body of all eligible citizens executes its will. One form of democracy is direct democracy, in which all eligible citizens have active participation in the political decision making, for example voting on policy initiatives directly. Direct democracy is a political system where the citizens participate in the decision-making personally, contrary to relying on intermediaries or representatives. The use of a lot system, a characteristic of Athenian democracy, is unique to direct democracies. In this system, important governmental and administrative tasks performed by citizens picked from a lottery. In most modern democracies, the whole body of eligible citizens remain the sovereign power but political power is exercised indirectly through elected representatives; this is called a representative democracy. It involves the election of government officials by the people being represented. The most common mechanisms involve election of the candidate with a majority or a plurality of the votes. Most western countries have representative systems. Democratic governance feeds into economic and social policies that are responsive to people's needs and aspirations, that aim at eradicating poverty and expanding the choices that people have in their lives, and that respect the needs of future generations. In essence, therefore, democratic governance is the process of creating and sustaining an environment for inclusive and responsive political processes and settlements.

#### **4.3. Tolerance and a liberal democracy**

Political tolerance is the willingness to extend basic rights and civil liberties to persons and groups whose viewpoints differ from one's own. It is a central tenet of a liberal democracy.<sup>[3]</sup> A liberal democracy recognises the individual's rights to liberty, and other rights that are based on the importance of liberty. A very influential argument for liberalism comes from J. S. Mill's 'On Liberty'. Mill argues that the dealings of society with the individual should be regulated by 'one simple principle' known as 'Liberty' The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others... Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.<sup>[4]</sup> (*On Liberty*, pp. 68-9). Mill thinks liberty should be very extensive, as extensive as possible, without giving us the freedom to harm other people. Mill wants to protect individual freedom in three key areas <sup>[5]</sup>: 1) freedom of thought which

cover different area of belief 2) freedom in how we live our lives 3) freedom to unit with others for any purpose to which we agree. Before Mill, discussion of toleration was limited to whether *religious* differences should be tolerated or not. Upholding individual liberty is going to require tolerance. Liberalism extends liberty widely; tolerance will also need to extend widely. This is a trait of liberalism, its aim to tolerance as much as possible. A liberal democracy for Mill, is more than a democracy in which individual freedom are protected against legislation and social opinion.

#### 4.4. Tolerance and a pluralist democracy

A pluralist society is one in which, there are different views on questions of politics, morality, religion, and what it is to lead a good and meaningful life. Many liberal philosophers argue that disagreement, oppositions, and conflicts of ideas practices are an inevitable and permanent part of human society. Even if one tries, to get rid of them by force, there is still a conflict. We can respond to pluralism by trying to force everyone to agree with us – either by changing people’s mind, or simply by killing, or forcing out of the country those who disagree. If pluralism is permanent, the only alternative to force is tolerance. If we are not to act to suppress or interfere with those practices and values with which we disagree, we must tolerate them. Of course, as Mill notes, we can still try to persuade other people of our point of view. But either we use force or we do not. If we do not, then this is tolerance. So, tolerance becomes the virtue that characterizes a pluralist liberal democracy; without it, such a society is not possible.

#### 4.5. Notion of tolerance

The origins of the term, ‘tolerance’ are rooted in the Latin word ‘*tolerabilis*’, which means carrying or lifting an object. Both tolerance and ‘*tolerabilis*’ linguistically imply the existence of a burden, originally a physical one and later on a mental one.<sup>[6]</sup> It is common to see the Religions Wars in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the historical origins of the relatively modern concept of tolerance. More than a thousand years went by from St Augustine’s position of extreme religious intolerance<sup>[7]</sup> (St Augustine, 408: 382-389) until Christian religious tolerance emerged and, perhaps ironically, set the basis for secular liberalism, freedom of conscience and freedom from religion. In an almost evolutionary development, tolerance was first applied in the inter- Christian sphere,<sup>[8]</sup> then in the inter-religious sphere and finally in the public-secular sphere. Throughout this journey the understanding of tolerance as a burden that lies on the tolerant person’s shoulders has not changed.

Tolerance is the virtue of a civilized age. It is the virtue that helps us to put up with those, who have different ways and opinions, and outlook on life. It enables us to see always the other side of things, to suffer fools with patience, fanatics without losing out temper. We look upon tolerance as a mark of education and superior culture of ethics of the polite society. After all, the world has not been set to one pattern, nor have men been shaped in a single mould. Difference, in environment or conditions of life, causes difference in temperament and opinion. Each distinctive outlook has its own background. A cultured person takes these

into account, makes allowance for them and is ready to make concessions and compromise. In this long run, mere passion never leads to any good nor solves any problem; passion has to be controlled and disciplined by reason and tolerance.

Tolerance is not only an abstract virtue; it is of considerable influence in the current affairs of life. Man is a social being and has to live in a spirit of harmony and co-operation with others. In this process some amount of give-and-take is necessary, a capacity for compromise. We cannot persuade others unless we ourselves are at the same time ready to be persuaded by practicing sweet reasonableness. Thus it will be seen that tolerance as a social virtue, is opposed to dogmatism or dictatorship. We should never tolerate moral corruption, social wrongs, political and financial dishonesty; we should never be complaisant towards attacks on our national integrity, on our fundamental rights on the forces of progress in society.

Unfortunately, anarchism and intolerance seem to be on the upgrade, of late. The projects are intended to shed light on what determines levels of tolerance and intolerance among citizens who live in areas that differ in measures of economic prosperity or in degree of ethnic pluralism, or in states in differing positions on the continuum from authoritarian rule to democracy. We are testing the influence of contextual variables such as the character of state institutions, their level of democratic performance, and varying degrees of cultural or ethnic pluralism. Furthermore, we aim to explore a number of new hypotheses on what makes individuals and societies more tolerant. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "intolerance is itself a form of violence and an obstacle to the growth of a true democratic spirit."

#### **4.6. Importance of tolerance in practice of democracy**

The word tolerance means the willingness to accept or to tolerate, especially opinions or behaviour you may not agree with, or to behave sensibly with those who are not like you. It means showing respect for the race, gender, opinions, religion and ideologies of other people or groups, and to admire the good qualities and good work of others.<sup>[9]</sup> And to express one's point of view in a decent and respectful way while respecting the sentiments of others. Tolerance can be shown in many ways, on different occasions and at different times. A person might fully disagree with others on any issue, from religion to politics, while at the same time honouring and respecting those with different ideas and opinions and treating them with full dignity and honour. Tolerance is needed in all spheres of life, and on every level and on every stage, because it plays a vital role to establish peace and love, from the smallest unit up to the highest unit of society. Tolerance does not mean that only one person or party shows tolerance and the others do not. When some people disagree on a certain issue they must advocate and express their opinion in a respectful manner, and hateful and provocative words should not be used. Tolerance must be shown from both sides on issues, in order for it to be effective. Here, let it be clear that showing respect and tolerance to the opinions of others does not necessarily mean you have to compromise your principles or embrace or accept others' ideas. It is simply a matter of fundamental human rights. The right of every human being that his sensibilities and sentiments shall not be violated and offended must be recognised. And every human person has the right to have an opinion and to express it.

In an age where the electronic media has drawn us closer together into what is called a global village, or a global society, its benefits will only be felt when mutual goodness prevails, when mutual respect and understanding prevail.<sup>[10]</sup> If, instead of good feelings, hatred emerges, if restlessness usurps heartfelt peace, then we must accept that this is not progress, but is something that will take us towards unexpected results. In this globalisation, where people of different backgrounds, cultures and religions are living together, and where the world has become multicultural and full of diversity, establishing tolerance and harmony has become very crucial and important, and fostering mutual love and affection has become vital. Without tolerance and harmony the lasting peace of societies cannot be maintained, and loyalty for each other cannot be established. When a citizen loves his country, he exhibits loyalty and devotion and makes sacrifices for the sake of the nation. Lack of tolerance leads to fighting, violence, and finally it destroys the peace and security of society. When people fail in their arguments they become intolerant, and then they use force and aggression to support their point of view. We have seen considerable incidents in recent history where, because of lack of tolerance, people have attacked people of other faiths, their places of worship, and their communities.

#### **4.7. Importance of tolerance in social life**

Tolerance is the key to maintaining social relations of harmony and peace while preserving the differences in people, culture, lifestyle and religion. Tolerance is strength of character, as well as learned behaviour. Showing tolerance implies no disapproval, no recognition. Tolerance is an important principle of self-governing religion. Tolerance is an important feature that a lot of people do not have, but need. There are three key words namely, respect, peace and courage which are very important to get tolerance in social life.<sup>[11]</sup> Respect is the number one step in life, because with the respect you can get far in life. If you want respect, you have to show respect, even if you feel disrespected, you can be a great man, and to be respectful and this is where patience comes in. Without peace, the world would be a disaster. You should try to avoid situation or better the situation. Again, this is a place where tolerance. Courage is another word that we need in life. Courage can also mean stepping into a bad situation, as we see little get bullied and stop it.

One of the greatest attributes of tolerance is, when you can take more, you can put out. When people put it on you, and you just take it without hurting your back, it will make you a valuable asset to the community. We also need tolerance for HIV and AIDS victims, people with mental illness, the homeless and people suffering from addiction. These people are the “outcasts “of our society. People should focus on practicing tolerance in their daily lives. Parents should not influence their children with their own prejudices; they should teach their children tolerance. The media should use positive images that promote cultural sensitivity and understanding. Teachers should promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Governments should strive to institutionalize the policy of tolerance. Show respect essential humanity in everyone. Become part of the solution and not be part of the problem. Use your honesty, morality, and compassion in the study and practice of tolerance. The importance of tolerance as a social value cannot be understated for life in a harmonious society. We can either come together or live in discord and strife.

#### 4.8. Importance of tolerance in moral life

An alternative way for us to think of tolerance is to place it within the moral domain and recognise that it is what it is, a moral virtue. Many recent philosophers have linked tolerance with respect, equality and liberty. Those such as Michael Dusche, John Rawls and Michael Walzer among others, argue that we should regard tolerance as a positive civic and moral duty between individuals, irrespective of colour, creed or culture.<sup>[12]</sup> In other words, it is a moral obligation or duty which involves respect for the individual as well as mutual respect and consideration between people. Tolerance between people makes it possible for conflicting claims of beliefs, values and ideas to coexistence as long as they fit within acceptable moral values. So while different marriage practices fit in within acceptable moral values, sexual abuse of children is immoral and cannot be tolerated. Tolerance is an essential component in social unity and a remedy to intolerance and prejudice. The idea that tolerance is a moral duty had been acknowledged by earlier civil libertarians, such as John Locke, Baruch Spinoza, John Stuart Mill and others. They argue that tolerant people value the individual, his or her independence and freedom of choice. When tolerance is placed within the moral domain relating to fairness, justice and respect and avoiding causing harm to others, it can only be viewed as a positive moral virtue. Moral values such as fairness, justice, empathy, tolerance and respect are shared, if not universal, values relevant to dealing with human diversity

Tolerance examined as separate concept could have unique implications for education and social policy. Education aimed at promoting a harmonious society could do well to focus more on the relationship between morality and tolerance. Grounding tolerance in theories of morality allows for an alternative educational approach to promote harmonious intergroup relationships. Part of this education would involve developing a strong sense of fairness and justice and the ability to empathise with the plight of others who are different in racial characteristics, ethnicity or nationality.

#### 4.9. Importance of tolerance in political life

In political life tolerance means accepting and respecting the basic rights and civil liberties of persons and groups whose viewpoints differ from one's own. All citizens, including political leaders, have a responsibility to practise political tolerance in their words and actions.<sup>[13]</sup> As an ideal, democracy upholds that members of the society should treat each other, and be treated, as equals. Underlying democracy is the acceptance and respect of the other. Democratic life is both the right to differ as well as the acceptance of such difference by all. Democracy implies respect for the plurality of views and virtues of dialogue as a means of resolving conflict. Political intolerance is engendered by a willingness to restrict the rights of a disliked person or group based on their differing views. It represents a threat to democracy. Political tolerance learns from others, get closer to the truth, and benefit from a vital public life. Developing a culture of tolerance is a long term undertaking that removes the roots of intolerance and is necessary for the democratic process.

Political life involves confrontation, and this is perfectly normal. Institutions of democracy, such as parliaments, provide the channels to make confrontation between opinions possible. Freedom of expression is the working tool of members of parliament, without which they cannot represent their constituents. Members of parliament need some measure of protection to carry their work, most importantly, protection of their freedom of speech. Thus, parliamentarians generally enjoy immunity from prosecution or other proceedings for votes they cast, statements they make in parliament and acts carried out as part of their parliamentary function. Parliamentary immunity safeguards the integrity and effectiveness of the parliamentary institution. The freedom of conscience and expression of parliamentarians is frequently limited in practice by political parties, which seek to exercise control over their members. Political tolerance is therefore essential to the functioning of parliaments and should be actively pursued in practice.

Lack of political tolerance is a problem everywhere. It manifests itself when political leaders refuse to give space to opposition parties and politics, when political parties do not tolerate dissent from their membership and, more generally, through a rejection of different views. The IPU has chosen the theme of "Democracy and political tolerance" for the International Day of Democracy 2009 in order to highlight the importance of creating a culture of tolerance in society, and political life in particular.

## 5. Conclusion

Democracy is government of, by, and for the people. It is government of a community in which all citizens, rather than favoured individuals or groups, have the right and opportunity to participate. In a democracy, the people are sovereign. The people are the ultimate source of authority. The concept of tolerance is important in democratic theory as well as it is necessary quality of our everyday life. The worldwide celebration of the International Day for Tolerance was an annual observance declared by UNESCO in 1995 to generate public awareness of the dangers of intolerance, and to help people understand the importance of tolerance. The annual celebration of this day reminds us how important and crucial these values are. And it does not mean that we only observe tolerance on this day, but this day is just a reminder, so we carry on these values throughout the year. How nice it would be if everyone tries to express himself in a decent and respectful way with tolerance. The world is full of diversity, and that is the beauty of our universe. If there had not been any diversity, the world would appear boring and unattractive, and without any competition. If we culture tolerance, we will be free from all the pain of envy within ourselves, then our soul will live in peace and happiness.



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