

Joel Meler

Mr. D'Angelo

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Religious Tolerance

In an organized empire having religious tolerance is one of the most important things to reach success. Religious tolerance works better than religious intolerance. In the Ottoman Empire they were very flexible with religion and turned out to be the longest lasting Muslim empire. Following them was the Mughal Empire, which was also somewhat religiously tolerant, and the least lasting Muslim empire were the Safavids, who had very small religious tolerance.

The Ottomans were very tolerant on religion. The only people they forced to convert were the Janissaries, and it was for military needs (Bulliet 427). What gave the Ottoman so much power was the great military that they had and their tolerance on religion: "The Ottoman's strength rested on strong military organization and their tolerance for the various ethnic and religious groups they conquered"(World History in Brief, Peter N. Stearns). For example, when the ottomans conquered the city of Constantinople the sultan, Mehmed II, allowed the Christians to stay and still follow their religions, of course in exception for the ones who were going to be Janissaries. .This empire is a great proof of the advantage that religious tolerance offers. They lasted from 1453 to 1922, which is 469 years.

The Safavids, unlike the Ottomans, were very intolerant towards religion. Their leader, Ismail, forced Shi'ism all over Iran creating a separation that the country had never experienced before. "The imposition of Shi'ite made the split in within the country permanent"(Bulliet 432). That split was not good for the country's unity. Many people inside this empire were very unhappy with this imposition, it affected their lives, and it also affected their psychological lives: "Shi'ism also affected the psychological life of the people"(Bulliet 433). It affected them because commemorations and prayers were all based on Shi'ism when ten percent of the population was still Sunni and other religions (Bulliet 433). Around one year after the Shah Abba's death, the government had become too weak and received no help from nomadic groups, nor from other people, leaving the country defend less against a group of Afghans who conquer Isfahan. This empire is a great proof of the disadvantage that religious intolerance offers. They lasted from 1502 to 1722, which is 220 years, half of what the Ottomans lasted.

The Mughals of India, like the Ottomans, were also religiously tolerant. Their leader, Akbar, was very tolerant with religion, out of every official holding land revenues that he appointed; seventy percent were Muslims when the other thirty percent were Hindus and other religions (Bulliet 437). Akbar also married a Rajput princess, which caused his desire for reconciliation between the Muslims and the Hindus (Bulliet 437). He also made himself the center of a new "Divine Faith" which incorporated Muslim, Hindu, Zoroastrian, Sikh, and Christian belief (Bulliet 437). Akbar made Hindus feel comfortable. One important thing he did for non-Muslims was the removal of a tax called the Jizya, which was a poll tax non-Muslims had to pay. The Empire was running just fine, however, Akbar died and his grand son Aurangzeb took the throne and reinstated

many restrictions on Hindus, like for example, he made Hindus of important families convert to Islam and he also reinstated the Jizya, which many people disliked (History Politics, Manas). When Aurangzeb died, the country had weakened because of his changes and for more on India had foreign invasion which completely caused the decline of the Mughal empire. This empire also proves that being tolerant with religion lets the empire run smoothly, but when Aurangzeb reinstated restriction it caused problems, and it was a big cause of the decline. They lasted from 1526 to 1857, which is 331 years, placing them in the second longest Muslim empire.

Religious tolerance is the best way of running an empire. If people have no restrictions they can follow their beliefs and there will be no fights, nor reformations. Reformations are usually a big cause for civil wars, which can lead to a decline of an empire and many kills. Naturally, when human beings have restrictions it bothers them, religion restrictions is a big one, however, if they have no restrictions they do not have to worry about anything. If everyone is allowed to practice their beliefs there will be peace (The American Forum for Global Education, Religion tolerance).

The Ottomans were religiously tolerant and were the longest lasting Muslim empire of all time, 469 years. The Safavids were not tolerant at all and forced Shi'ism all over Iran and lasted half the time the Ottomans lasted, 220 years, not only because of religion intolerance, but it was a big part of it. Finally, the Mughals lasted a decent time due to their religion tolerance with which they started their empire but it was changed when Akbar died, they lasted 331 years. Religious tolerance is better than religious intolerance when running an empire.

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Joel Meler

Bibliography:

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