

## **Tasamuh Versus Tolerance as Practical Approach to Encounter the Conflicting Issue**

### ***Perbandingan Tasamuh dengan Toleransi sebagai Pendekatan Praktikal Menangani Isu Konflik***

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#### ABSTRACT

*Tasamuh is a concept introduced in Islam and was practiced during the time of Prophet Muhammad SAW. Its concept and practice was proved to be the realistic and practical concept in the multi religious society during his period. Even several centuries after the prophetic time, Tasamuh was also substantiated as good practice of Muslim society towards non-Muslims as to ensure social harmony with regard to sensitive religious issues. Changing of time created life to be more complicated and formed more pluralistic societies. The pluralities of religions and cultures require a fit solution to settle any conflicting issues arose. In this case, much discussion on the concept of tolerance took place compared to the concept of Tasamuh. This paper means to grasp the meaning of Tasamuh and tolerance from their roots either grounded for the sources or resulted from the history of the society. By using method of content analysis of the references that related to Tasamuh and tolerance, the paper explores the meaning of both words as well as the factors that formed the terminological meanings of Tasamuh and tolerance. The paper further presents the comparison and contrast of both concepts from several angles. As a result, this paper decides that Tasamuh or suggested as Islamic tolerance to be more comprehensive concept which can be practiced to deal with the differences in pluralistic society.*

*Keywords: Tasamuh; Islamic tolerance; tolerance; conflicting issues; pluralistic society*

#### ABSTRAK

*Konsep Tasamuh merupakan suatu yang diperkenal dalam Islam dan sejarah kehidupan Nabi Muhammad SAW mempamerkan Tasamuh secara praktikal. Tasamuh dari sudut teoritikal dan praktikal membuktikan bahawa ianya adalah suatu perkara yang realistik untuk diamalkan dalam kehidupan masyarakat pelbagai agama semasa era Nabi Muhammad SAW. Bahkan ia turut menjadi amalan masyarakat Islam dalam melestarikan kerukunan hidup bersama masyarakat bukan Islam beberapa kurun selepas zaman nabi terutama apabila membabitkan isu sensitif antara agama. Namun peredaran masa menjadikan kehidupan kian kompleks dan membentuk masyarakat lebih bersifat pluralistik yang memerlukan solusi yang baik dalam menangani konflik yang berbangkit. Dalam hal ini, lebih banyak perbincangan tentang toleransi berbanding dengan konsep Tasamuh dilakukan dalam usaha mencari pendekatan yang sesuai bagi menangani isu-isu yang menimbulkan konflik. Penulisan ini bertujuan untuk memahami pengertian Tasamuh dan toleransi sama ada ia terbina berdasarkan kepada asas sumber atau sejarah kehidupan masyarakat. Dengan menggunakan metod analisa kandungan ke atas bahan-bahan yang berkaitan, kajian ini meneroka pengertian kedua-dua perkataan serta faktor yang membentuk peristilahan Tasamuh dan toleransi. Seterusnya kajian turut mengemukakan persamaan dan perbezaan yang wujud antara kedua konsep. Hasilnya, keputusan yang diperolehi memutuskan bahawa Tasamuh atau dicadangkan sebagai toleransi Islam adalah konsep yang lebih menyeluruh yang dapat direalisasikan dalam menangani perbezaan yang berlaku dalam masyarakat.*

*Kata kunci: Tasamuh; toleransi Islam; toleransi; isu konflik; masyarakat pluralistik*

## INTRODUCTION

A multi-racial society faces a very challenging life when dealing with its various aspects of life. One of the most complicated issue relates with religious life of the people in the society. Facing this kind of issue requires high intellectuality and wisdom to settle it thus avoiding the occurrence of conflict that results in the chaotic incidents. Continuous discussion and efforts were presented at all levels of society as to find out the solution for any conflicting issues of multi-racial society (Khadijah Mohd Khambali @ Hambali et al. 2019:74). The idea of tolerance, appreciation and respect were introduced as the dynamic approach to fix the challenging and conflicting issues.

The notion of tolerance, acceptance and respect were introduced by western scholar as well as the term tolerance was also been discussed by Muslim scholars which will be discussed later on. While in Islamic world, the idea of *Tasamuh* was introduced about 1,400 years ago. It is not just a matter of idea but it also has been put into practical life of Prophet Mohammad SAW. Regardless the times of Quranic revelation as to be the main source of Islam, the term fixes and caters social and religious problem at all generation and its goes beyond the limits of times and places.

Thus, this brief writing means to analyze the idea of *Tasamuh* by using method of content analysis as to make it clear about certainty of the extent of the truth of the matter being specified. The discussion includes examining the meaning of *Tasamuh*, presenting the views and arguments, and evaluating its concept thus to decide its relevancy as a good approach in maintaining the well-being and sustainability of harmonious relations between different races.

## UNDERSTANDING *TASAMUH* (ISLAMIC TOLERANCE)

The term *Tasamuh* is literally translated as tolerance. However the meanings are not similar. The concept of tolerance has been widely discussed by non-Muslims especially western scholars as well among Muslim scholars (Abdul Salam 2008; Simon and Schaefer 2016; Schirmer, Weidenstedt & Reich 2012; Ibrahim 2013; Nurfarhana & Khadijah 2013; Miligan, Andersen R & Brym 2015). However, the discussion and research on the term tolerance

is more familiar compared to the discussion of *Tasamuh*. There is a few authors talked about *Tasamuh* (Jaffary 2003; Khadijah & Mohd Herzali 2015) but no specific discussion done on the both terms tolerance and *Tasamuh*. It is notably that the social and historical setting much affected the formation of terminological meaning of tolerance in the western perspective. Thus, they result in its different meaning from the terminological meaning of *Tasamuh* as being understood by the Muslims.

On the other, the meaning of *Tasamuh* is drawn by the important source Qur'an and then is translated into practical life of Muhammad SAW or called as Sunnah, positioned as the other important source of Islamic teaching besides Qur'an. According to the *Lisanul Arab*, the root word for *Tasamuh* is *Samha* that means generosity (Rohi 1997; Ibn Manzur 1992). While the word *Tasamuh* itself denotes *tasahul*. *Tasahul* derived from root word *sahl* means facile or smooth. The English translation of *Tasamuh* and *tasahul* is leniency, forbearance and indulgence (Rohi 1997; Ibn Manzur 1992). The contextual meaning of tolerance does not represent the true meaning of the word *Tasamuh*. According to Arabic morphology, the word *Tasamuh* is founded on the word *tafa'ul*. This word connotes involvement of two parties that participate in certain action, working together and each other. It contains most of positive attitude of leniency, forbearance, generosity, facilitating and indulgence. All these positive attributes take place among parties involved, giving and taking in the sense the any of the parties only hoping to give and the others to receive. It create a favorable atmosphere in applying *Tasamuh* through a notion of forming a good relationship between two parties that cooperatively agree to give and take (Jaffary & Kamarudin 2003; Muhammad Farid 2016). Nevertheless, connotation of tolerance implies the negative aspect whereby the one has no power to speak or disagree who compromise or tolerate with the disagreement and his right might be denied.

*Tasamuh* implies mutual tolerance and mutual acceptance of religious and cultural diversities. Viewing all the diversities as being decreed by Allah, assists individual to be able to receive dissimilar faith and religious practice will always took place in live. It is a receptive mind to listen to different opinions, to function in two ways as giving own views and accepting others without

affecting personal or own religious belief. (Khadijah et al, 2017) Apart from *Tasamuh*, the word *ikhtimal* which means an attitude and let the indulgence, is also used to describe the meaning of tolerance. It signifies accepting the diversity of cultures and religions as *sunnatullah* with open mind and compromise. In dictionary al-Muhit, Oxford Dictionary English Arabic (2008) the term *Tasamuh* consists of the meaning of *tasahul* (facilitating). Islam facilitates everyone to practice what he believes or what requires by his religion without any suppression. According to Khadijah and Mohd Herzali (2015), the most comprehensive meaning of *Tasamuh* is formed once the element mahabbah or love blended in the relation among Muslim and non-Muslim. There are some other words that give similar meaning with *Tasamuh*; those are *hilm* (forbearance) or *afw* (pardon / forgiveness) or *safh* (overlooking, disregarding) or *Sabr* (Ammar 2011). To be a person with *Tasamuh* is being one who can offer, forgive and be generous. (Muhammad Farid 2016) In fact all these words associate with the practice of *Tasamuh* in the life of Muhammad SAW in specific and supposed to be the practice of Muslim affairs. They formed a comprehensive meaning of *Tasamuh* which included generosity, leniency, liberality and flexibility in various matters and dealings without the desire for compensation, return or rewards (Muhammad Imarah 2014).

It is also worth of taking note that all those stated meaning never transgress the limit of Islamic tolerance. Promoting Islamic tolerance does not signify the parity of all religions as well it does not represent concession, indulgence, or lack of principles and seriousness (Ammar 2011). In other words, *Tasamuh* accepts the difference of religious beliefs and practices, respects them by letting them to enjoy their rights of believing and practicing their religion, but with the steadfastness of own belief and practice. There are universal values that could be shared but the religious beliefs and practices remain differed. Based on the explanation above, it is important to note that *Tasamuh* as Islamic tolerance does not stand alone, it comes together with other terms or elements which form it to be a very special and comprehensive term compared to the word tolerance as derived from Latin. Moreover, it also need to be assisted with other principles; such as equality or human freedom to form it as a very firm Islamic concept. The next discussion focuses on the elements that relate with Islamic tolerance.

## THE ROOT OF *TASAMUH* IN ISLAM

Understanding the idea of *Tasamuh* in Islam requires special attention given to Quranic verses. Most and foremost, Islam founded the basic principle of human interaction in which is rooted from the concept of equality of mankind. As stated in surah *al-Hujurat 13*; “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).” In these verses Allah declares that all human are derived from one soul, then He created his mate. The nation is developed from these two persons who are Adam and Hawa. Thus, the verse affirms that man is equal in term of mankind (Ibn Kathir 1993). Al-Razi(1990) highlighted the matter can be proud of two factors; origin of man and attributes of man. With regards to man’s creation, nothing can be proud of a man over the others because they are all similar and equal. The physical appearance of man means nothing when the verse clarifies that the only thing that differentiate man in front of Allah is righteousness. Based on the verses that all human should be treated equally without considering his social or cultural background.

Muslims are also reminded to be have a good manner with the Non-Muslim as proposed in *Surah al-Ankabut 46*; “and dispute ye not with the People of the Book except with means better (than mere disputation) unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say “We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam).” According to Qatadah and others, the ruling of these verses have been abrogated with other verses (Ayat al-Saif) which means discussion or having dispute with them was no longer applicable. However, the other viewed that the ruling remained for those who contemplate on the truth of Islam, so the best method could be done is discussion (Ibn Kathir 1993). When having discussion and dispute with those non-Muslims, the Muslim are advised to talk nicely with them and even it is not just a matter of verbal dispute but it involves all kinds of communication and interaction with the non-Muslims. The Muslims are advised to be properly talk or act when dealing with the Non-Muslims and not to be harsh since being harsh would not

be a way to settle the dispute but even affects the relation between Muslim and non-Muslims in the sense it causes prejudice on Muslim behaviors in the eyes of the Non-Muslims. However this method is irrelevant for those who hate or fight against Islam and Muslim (al-Zamakhsyari n.d).

With regards the people of books, Quran gives special attention due to shared value that is found in the beliefs of Muslims and the people of books. This value could be the point that unifies them.”O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah.” If then they turn back, say ye: “Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah’s Will). (*Ali Imran 64*). The people of the books in this verses refers to the Jews, Nasrani and their followers. Muslims are required to call them for the beneficial words that can unify between Muslims and them; there is no god but Allah, the One and Only. Do not ever worship anyone or anything than Allah, if happen the people of the book turn back, Muslims are steadfast in their obedience and worship to Allah (Ibn Kathir 1993).

As well as, when having interaction with them, the tolerated matters extends to the issues of food and marriage. “This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers but chaste women among the People of the Book revealed before your time when ye give them their due dowers and desire chastity not lewdness nor secret intrigues. If anyone rejects faith fruitless is his work and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)”. (*al-Maidah 5*). Most of Scholars agreed upon the permissibility of eating food slaughtered by the people of the book because they also believed that slaughtered animals with the names of other than Allah is prohibited (Ibn Kathir 1993). Based on the above verses, the tolerated matters between Muslims and the people of books extend to food and marriage. Muslims are allowed to enjoy food cooked by them as well as marry with them.

The other verse advises Muslim to behave properly towards all the non- Muslims as stated “And if ye do catch them out catch them out no worse than they catch you out: but if ye show patience that is indeed the best (course) for those

who are patient”. (*al Nahl 126*) The verse orders for equality in punishment and moderation in fulfilling the rights. Ibn Kathir mentioned that Ibn Zaid has said that Muslims are asked to forgive the idolaters because due to forgiveness many strong man converted to Islam. Though Islam allows Muslim to punish the enemies of Islam and Muslims as much as they did to Muslim but forgiveness is better (al-Razi 1990).

Furthermore, Quranic verses also mention the possible positive effect of having good manner with those who act harshly against the Muslim, as stated “Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate” (*Fussilat 34*) When facing two good matters choose the best between them and avoid doing evils as being done on you. The kind of action taken only by the one who is patient (Ibn Kathir 1993; al-Razi 1990; al-Zamakhsyari n.d.). It is advised that the Muslims should behave properly or in good manners especially when dealing the non-Muslim such talking nicely or helping them when they are in need of helps because these manners could possibly attract them to be closed to us as well as to Islam. The same advised mention in surah (*Thoha 44*) “But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (Allah). It is required for Muslim to speak softly with the hope that the non-believers will get the guidance and fear of Allah (Ibn Kathir 1993).

The further verses mention the same standpoint; “Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance.” Thus have we made alluring to each people its own doings. In the end will they return to their Lord and we shall then tell them the truth of all that they did. (*al-An’am 108*). Muslim should have good dealings with the non-Muslims who tolerate with them, however the Muslim supposed not to have good interaction with the enemies who never tolerate with Muslim and Islam. “It may be that Allah will grant love (and friendship) between you and those whom ye (now) hold as enemies: for Allah has power (over all things); and Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful. Allah forbids you not with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loves those who are just. Allah only forbids you with regard to those who fight you for (your) Faith and drive you out of your homes and support (others) in driving you out from turning to them (for friendship and

protection). It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances) that do wrong. (*al-Mumtahanah* 7-9) This verses indicate that it is allowed to have good relation with the non-believers (al-Razi 1990; al-Zamakhsyari n.d.). However, it limits the practices of *Tasamuh* with those who cannot tolerate with the Muslims and Islam to the extent that they are fighting the Muslims and driving them out of the country.

Besides the limitation of *Tasamuh* sets up by the Quranic verses, the other verses guide the Muslims with the matter excludes from the scope of *Tasamuh*. It was stated in surah *al-Kafirun* 1-9 "Say : O ye that reject Faith, worship not that which ye worship, Nor will ye worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship, Nor will ye worship that which I worship. To you be your Way, and to me mine". Historically, this surah was revealed when the pagan Quraish consulted the prophet and tried to negotiate with him regarding the teaching of Islam. According to Hadrat Abdullah bin Abbas, the Quraish proposed to the Holy Prophet; "We shall give you so much of wealth that you will become the richest man of Makkah. We shall give you whichever woman you like in marriage. We are prepared to follow and obey you as our leader, only on the condition that you will not speak ill of our gods. If you do not agree to this, we present another proposal which is to your as well as to our advantage." When the Holy Prophet asked what it was, they said that if he would worship their gods, Lat and Uzza, for a year, they would worship his God for the same space of time. The Holy Prophet said: "Wait a while; let me see what my Lord commands in this regard." Thereupon the revelation came down surah *al-kafirun* and verse surah *Az-Zumar*: "Say to them: ignorant people, do you bid me to worship others than Allah?" (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Tabarani). There are other traditions narrated by several narrators showed that the Quraish had proposed such things to the Holy Prophet not once, in one sitting, but at different times and on different occasions; and there was need that they should be given a definite, decisive reply so that their hope that he would come to terms with them on the principle of "give and take" was frustrated forever. The main theme of the surah is giving clear cut differentiation between Muslims and the disbelievers in which the religious rites cannot be combined as well as Allah cannot be worshipped in interchanging with other gods. It indirectly gives us clear idea that faith cannot be

considered as a matter to be tolerated with. Thus it is a scope of *Tasamuh* must exclude a matter of faith and religious rites. Based on all these verses, the guidelines of *Tasamuh* can be drawn are;

1. *Tasamuh* recognises the existence of various people with all kinds of the differences such religion as sunnatullah.
2. *Tasamuh* acknowledges the human freedom by
3. giving him choice to choose any religion without any force.
4. It is required to deal with all people in honest and good dealings (both in words and actions) including the non-Muslims.
5. It is proposed that good dealing include those who ignorant and behave harshly towards Muslims.
6. Muslim can only be intolerant in a case whereby the non-Muslim who hatred and fight against Muslims and Islam.
7. Muslim can eat food prepared by the people of book and can marry them, this tolerated matters only means for them.
8. The matter of faith and worship cannot be tolerated.

It is vital to stress that *Tasamuh* was grounded with the basis from Quran as a very strong root because it is something fundamental that is not influenced by the life changing. However the application of the fundamental could be different from a society to others based on the suitability. Based on the above explanation, *Tasamuh* connotes acknowledgement of different people with distinctive views, beliefs and cultures. This acknowledgement proceeds with the action of permitting and letting them to freely think, choose and practice religion of their own.

## UNDERSTANDING TOLERANCE

Tolerare is the latin root word for tolerance and toleration. Both shared the same meaning and some authors used them exchangeably (Heyd 1996). However, some other authors differentiate both words by giving more accurate meanings of each. The word 'tolerance' is embraced in a matter of personal behaviour, nonetheless toleration pertains to the issues of legislation or of political and social principles (Lukes 1997). According to oxford online dictionary, 'tolerare' is defined as an ability or willingness to tolerate the existence

of opinions or behavior that one dislikes or disagrees with. It connotes the one who tolerate have to in intermediate status between accepting wholeheartedly and unrestrained opposition (Simon & Schaefer 2016; Fazilah Idris, Khadijah Muda & Khairul Anwar Mastor 209: 35). It may also refer to one's readiness to build a relationship and live together with others whose cultural background differs (Jaffary & Ibrahim 2015) and accepts other's right to disagree as well respect him without being judgmental. (Khadijah et al. 2017). The most important matter is this kind of positive attitude appreciates others by letting them to enjoy basic human freedom (Aprialiani & Ghazali 2016). The other important element of tolerance is making a wise decision by refraining self in spite of his authority to act, from doing acts contrary to or not to agree to (Craig 2005: 1022). Prior to the act of tolerance, desire and willingness are important to assist individual in order to face the differences. Regardless any kind of the difficulties faced of the differences, the desire should be accompanied with the ability to face it. After all, supposed action should be thought and decided in the case of differences.

Furthermore, the above explained meaning does not portray the complete meaning hold and practiced by certain individual or society. The terminological meaning should be considered due to the variety of understanding tolerance according to the specific context. It is also influenced by the historical settings which included political and social aspects. As a matter of fact, the understanding of tolerance terminologically is much shaped by the historical, geographical, social and religious reality that confronted people and their culture (Mendus 1989)

Terminologically, tolerance relates with the history of people on Europe. At early period of Europe, the word intolerance is popular among people in the society rather than the word tolerance. Even in Britannica Encyclopedia, no definition has been given to the word 'toleration' but to refer to the word intolerance (Umar 1979). At that time people faced with incidents of intolerance. At the early four centuries of western history, the Christians endured the hard life and prosecution was common among them because their refusal to follow the rituals of Rome. In fact, Christianity encourages its adherences to be patient and not to seek revenge. A lot of efforts were done including the issuance of official sanction as the initiatives to cope with this intolerance. The scenario of intolerance created the

idea of tolerance. Based on that situation, tolerance is perceived as enduring hardship or persecution with patience and meant hopes for divine favor. This effort of tolerance which incites patience in oneself enable him to end up the conflict (Mendus 1989).

The continuance of Intolerance caused people to struggle against injustice, oppression of religion and adherents of different religious views. It begins with a religious war between Christians and Jews. Jews are regarded as enemies of Jesus Christ as he was planning the crucifixion. The error was borne by all the descendants of the Jews and has resulted in the spirit of hatred and hostility being prolonged among Christians (al-Muhdar 1990). In the middle ages, religious conflicts such as happened among Protestants and Catholics have created a profound impact on the understanding of the concept of tolerance. Various efforts were made to ease tensions, such as guarantees of religious freedom which only makes religion a private affair, as well as agreement that has been made to ensure that the interests of all parties are met. When there are those who disagree with an issue or matter, the parties were required to find a solution for the purpose of compromise. In these circumstances, tolerance occurs and it means authorization in law (Quaquebeke, Henrich and Eckloff 2007). At the early modern world, tolerance refers to the readiness of an individual or a community to permit the presence and/or expression of ideas, beliefs, and practices differing from what is accepted by that individual or by the dominant part of the community. This meaning were simply intellectual and pragmatic reactions to unique sixteenth and seventeenth century experiences with religious and political conflict. Consequently, understanding the concept of tolerance is dependent on the practice of tolerance itself which is influenced by the social environment, religion, and politics of a community. Based on the historical background of the case in Europe shaping perceptions of assessing tolerance as a society that does not fit in solving a difference in society (Mendus 1989).

#### COMPARE AND CONTRAST OF *TASAMUH* AND TOLERANCE

Most of the times, tolerance or *Tasamuh* involve two important elements; differences and argument. The diversity of ideology, religion, culture and practices create the differences among the members

TABLE 1. A comparison between Tolerance and *Tasamuh*

Comparison items	Tolerance	<i>Tasamuh</i>
Origin	Initiated by man	Rooted from the source mainly Quran
involvement	Two parties: the strong /powerful/ majority over the weak/minority	Two parties: Mutually cooperative and both considered on par
Changeability	Evolve with the changing of live	Lasting in its basics and principles
Important features	Disagreement with internal protest	Disagreement with positive attributes such as generosity and leniency

in the society. Besides, the occurrence of tolerance required argument to be occurred. Meaning that the differences that occur between people are not big issue until it creates tension among them. These two elements could take place in beliefs, attitudes and practices which disagreed or unacceptable to the parties involved. The certain party decides to react with certain act against the disliked matter based on it discernment (Craig 2005). Such situation of disagreement could cause further conflict. Thus a flexible attitude is needed whereby a person can be a receptive and can bear with the differences. A thing that important to highlight, the word tolerance has a negative connotation in which it implies an act of pretense that is to pretend of accepting certain things that one's dislikes whilst he hold the attitude of protest. (Carey 1999; Fitzgerald 1999). This means that to tolerate does not really mean that one can accept or appreciate the world variety and difference.

Another drawback of tolerance in western perspectives it took place whereby one is aware of his perception of other individuals with conflicting views and practices it employs. There is still a gap between this individual because the individual is considered to be the outsider or not being accepted part of the community or his group. Impact, impression or perception of the individuals outside of it as strangers still exists. The implication is that the view of tolerance can only be accepted as a basic condition to the existence of a peaceful situation in the life of a plural society. On the other side this minimum level of social interaction is not sufficient in establishing harmonious relations between members of different religious communities and cultural or racial bias problem (Pasamonik 2004; Schirmer, Weidenstedt and Reich 2012).

The concept of *Tasamuh* also occurs in a situation of disagreement. However, the negative meaning of tolerance does not apply in it concept. The concept is practiced in a society that man enjoys the rights

and responsibilities. It is based on the recognition of human dignity, thus no discrimination is applied of one group over the other group. They all at the same level as human being that requires mutual feelings of understanding about the difference occurred. Then its leads towards mutual action of understanding. It can be seen from the practice of Muhammad, as the prophet in Islam. Once *Tasamuh* was practiced, it did not involve any prejudice on others but it showed respect of others as human as well as his right. Most of the times, when the Muslims writers wrote about tolerance, it reflects the meaning of *Tasamuh* that being understood or setting in their understanding of what has been stated in the Quran as well as being practiced by the prophet Muhammad SAW. In Tamring (2008) states that Islamic tolerance in general refers to the willingness of an individual to establish a relationship and co-exist with another individual of a different cultural and social background. Thus, the issue of considering others as outsiders is not exist in Islamic concept of tolerance even those who believe and practice religions others than Islam are considered as part of the members of society.

Moreover, tolerance in western view differs from the concept of *Tasamuh* on the matter that very fundamental. It can be witnessed in the consequences of belief in religion. Tolerance considered values of truth as something relative thus it creates all situations of differences as a platform to be tolerated in the sense to endure them without protest regardless it is social matter or matter of belief. Even it never considered whether it involves good things or evil things because in their perspective they are all relative. However, *Tasamuh* has certain limits because the truth is only from Allah. Then Islamic tolerance considered something good or bad as being determined by Allah. To be tolerant requires understanding of the subject matters that included in the tolerated ones. The facility provided by Islam in the name of tolerance should not exceed the limits of goodness

or truth as well as should not transgress Islamic belief.

### CONCLUSION

The presentation of the meaning and definition of both term *Tasamuh* and tolerance gives us a clear picture about the similarity and difference of the terms. Both has its own specific connotations either based on social and historical settings or rooted from the sources.

Their similarities can be seen in several aspect; both share the same situation; occurrence of difference and argument and then certain tolerant action will be considered. Both *Tasamuh* and tolerance accept the variety of ideology, belief and practices in a society. The practice tolerance or *Tasamuh* assist people in a pluralistic society to avoid any harmful response which ruins the harmonious social life. People are able to live side by side with those of holding different belief and practicing different rites and rituals. Both also requires the involvement of two parties which normally labelled as the majority, the powerful group and the minority with less power or no power. The concept of tolerance as perceived by the west as pretending to accept the differences with no opposite reaction or in other words one party has to tolerate with the situation because of no power to response or response might cause worse situation like killing, riots and so on. However, the concept of *Tasamuh* is a general concept that encompasses attitudes and actions involving the two parties to understand each other and accept differences without opposite reaction. These two parties do not necessarily refer to the majority and the minority, but they encompass any party that involve in the conflicting issues.

The concept of *Tasamuh* includes the idea of acceptance that consists of mercy, generosity and other virtues with the tolerated person or group compared to the former case, it is just a pretending of tolerance. Those virtues make human relations is not just a physical relation but it gives spirit to the human relation of tolerance. As a result it creates a strong foundation for concept of Islamic tolerance. To sum up, the concept of *Tasamuh* is the practical idea to be practiced in the issue of differences that might cause conflict in a pluralistic society. It is vital for every member of the society to fully comprehend the meaning and principles of *Tasamuh* because through deep understanding

it assists them to deal with the differences of opinions, beliefs and practices in pluralistic society. The principles that formed *Tasamuh* are very fundamental and functions as a very strong root in facing the challenges of the multiracial society.

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