Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal – Vol.1, No.6
Publication Date: October 10, 2014
DOI:10.14738/assrj.16.540
Adua, S. S. (2014); Implementing the Islamic Paradigm for Religious Tolerance for Peaceful Co-existence in Nigeria: The Example of Jamaat Nasrul Islam of Nigeria (JNI). *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal, 1*(6), 56-62

Implementing the Islamic Paradigm for Religious Tolerance for Peaceful Co-existence in Nigeria: The Example of *Jamaᶜat Nasrul* Islam of Nigeria (JNI)

Dr Sulaiman Sheu Adua
Department of Islamic, Christian and Comparative Religious Studies
Kwara State University, Malete.
sulaiman.sheu@kwasu.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

Tolerance and forgiveness are qualities which ensure success and prosperity in this world as well as in the hereafter. It should be remembered that forgiveness carries value when one is in a position to take revenge and it behaves only that person to forgive who possesses the necessary power. Islam teaches tolerance in whatever we do and if we encounter a problem or difficulty in life, we should not give up but continue struggling with prayer to God for the success of our objectives. Methodology relied solely on biographic appraisal of such studies that are related to this study. The paper looks at Jamaᶜatul Nasril Islam in this regard by way of examining how the organisation exhibited tolerance and created avenue for peaceful co-existence among Muslims and Non-Muslims alike in all areas of its jurisdiction. The paper concludes by making few recommendations to Muslim and Non-Muslim Organisations in Nigeria to emulate the Jamaᶜatul Nasril Islam style of operation for peaceful and harmonious co-existence in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

By the end of 1960, the Honourable Premier of Northern Nigeria, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, identified some Muslims who had interest in Islamic education and encouraged them to make the best use of their position to assist the cause of education in their respective domain. After a protracted debate in the Northern Region House of Assembly on how to serve the Muslims in particular and Islam in general. Sardauna seized the opportunity and called for a meeting where he invited all members who were Northerners and others who were Muslims in other regions.

Members of legislative, eminent Islamic scholars and Northern Emirs were invited where he delivered a speech at that occasion, the organisation called Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam was floated the late premier mentioned the following as the tasks before the new organisation (i) To propagate the religion of Islam and improve Muslims welfare (ii) To give Islam a uniform voice internally and externally and also (iii) To coordinate Islamic activities within Nigeria (iv) To educate people as well as responsible for the spread of Islam, and (v) uniting Islamic scholars together. The meeting was held on 5th January 1961. In his speech also, he advised those who attended the meeting that they should open a branch of the organisation at their various areas.

A committee was set up to advice the government as how to boost Islamic education in Northern Region. When the committee turned in its report with some far reaching recommendations, it became imperative to set up an organisation that will ensure their efficient.

Copyright © Society for Science and Education, United Kingdom

AN APPRAISAL OF THE VISIONS AND MISSIONS OF JAMA^{c}AT NASRIL ISLAM

Vision is an idea or a picture in ones imagination. Jama^{c}at Nasril Islam envisions a total war against ignorance in Islam and encouragement of the distribution of Islamic literature in Nigeria local languages, building mosques, and Islamic centre of learning, promoting unity among the Muslims, regardless of brotherhood affiliation and reformed brotherhood organisation. Similarly, Jama^{c}at Nasril Islam envisions to act as a voice externally on behalf of all Nigerian Muslims, as well to coordinate Islamic activities within Nigeria and to educate people, spread the religion of Islam, teach average Muslim on how to carry out his religious obligations as well consolidate the development of Northern states under the atmosphere of peace and stability.

The missions of Jama^{c}at Nasril Islam were drawn to meet the objectives of the organisation in other words to achieve its visions. These include: To propagate the principles of Islam thereby striving to win more adherents to the faith. To remove or eradicate immorality in the society and maintain Islamic morality among the Muslims and to promote friendly relationship among Nigerian Muslims in particular and world Muslim in general. To promote friendly relationship not only at National level but also at International level. To put into practice the ideals of Islam as prescribed in glorious Quran and practiced by the holy prophet of Islam, in other words to teach the Muslims normal way in which the religion of Islam is practiced as taught by Quran and explained in the practice of the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W)

It is the intention of Jama^{c}at Nasril Islam to achieve the set goals through the following instrumentality.

(i) Establishing and running of Hospitals, Dispensaries and Clinics both in rural and urban areas for the care of the sick.
(ii) Establishing and running of schools and libraries at all levels of education where Islamic ethic and culture will be the foundation of all subjects to be taught.
(iii) Co-ordination of the collection and distribution of Zakat from the Muslims.
(iv) Purchases of Da^{c}wah vehicles.

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN ISLAM

To develop an appreciation and understanding of tolerance, let firstly understand its literal meaning, Web steps Dictionary defines tolerance as:

(i) the capacity to endure pain or hardship.
(ii) allowable deviation from a standard
(iii) a permissive or liberal attitude toward beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's owns.

Literally the word "tolerance" means "to bear". As a concept it means "respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of the world's cultures, forms of expression and ways of being human". In Arabic it is called "Jasamuh", there are also other words that give similar meanings, such as "Hilm" (forbearance) or 'Afu" (pardon, forgiveness) or "Safh" (overlooking, disregarding).

Tolerance is a basic principle of Islam. It is a religious moral duty. It does not mean "concession, condescension or indulgence". It does not mean lack of principles or lack of seriousness about one's principles. People are tolerant of things that they do not care about. But this is not the case in Islam. Tolerance according to Islam does not mean that we believe that all religions are the same. It does not mean that we do not convey the message of Islam to others and do not wish them to become Muslims.

Islam teaches tolerance on all levels; individual, groups and states. It should be a political and legal requirement. Tolerance is the mechanism that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism) and the rule of law. The Qur'an says very clearly:

> *To every people have we appointed rites and ceremonies which they must follow, let them not then dispute with you on the matter, but do invite (them) to your Lord: for you are assuredly on the Right way. If they do wrangle with you, say, God knows best what it is you are doing. God will judge between you on the Day of Judgment concerning the matters (Q. 22:76-79).*

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) faced much difficulty and opposition in his own birth-place, the city of Mecca. He was eventually forced to migrate to Madina. But in spite of all the opposition and even physical torture that his followers suffered in Mecca, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) always approached the unbelievers to Mecca with tolerance At one stage of his mission, the prophet read to them a short chapter from the revelation:

> *O you do not believe? I worship what you worship, and you are not worshipping what I worship; not am I worshipping what you worship, neither-art you worshipping what I worship. Therefore, to you your religion; and to me my religion! (Chap. 109).*

Islam confirms that tolerances, a high human quality, enhances good relations and facilitates the means for mutual understanding and respect among people. the major sources of Islam, the Qur'an and sunnah, recommend and promote tolerance, as do the historic accounts of the caliphs who followed the prophet's (SAW) example. These sources do not only recommend the practice of tolerance among the Muslims toward each other, but also with the non-Muslims within the Islamic society.

The Qur'anic view of tolerance toward the people of the Book. As Qur'an is the primary source of guidance for the Muslims. It sets the foundation for their creed, legislation, ethics, moral behaviour and every matter of daily life. There are many verses that set the ground work for these relations that recommend kindness and excellent behavioiur.

Allah states that one of His objectives in creating humanity was that they should interact in the best of terms. Allah says:

> *O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes; that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)(Q. 49:13)*

Allah commands Muslims to be affectionate, kind and just in their practice of tolerance with Non-Muslims.
Allah says:

> *God 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 God loveth those who are just (Q. 60:8).*

The foundation of this tolerant view of other faiths is a set of beliefs and truths that Islam inculcates in the hearts and mind of Muslims. The most essential of these are: humanity's

common origin; the dignity of human beings; religious differences existing by Allah's will; Muslims not being charged with judging people of other faiths. Also, in addition to prohibiting forced conversion, Islam has encouraged establishing justice among people, which is required for stable and peaceful coexistence.

PROMOTION OF TOLERANCE AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE BY JNI

From the inception of this organisation in 1961 the Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam had attracted many non-Muslims into the Islamic faith. John Paden confirmed the conversion of many pagans into Islam by the founder of Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam in Zaria and Niger provinces despite the fact that he did not attempt to go into any of the Christian areas of the middle belt.

There are many groups of Islamic organisations which preach peaceful co-existence most especially in Nigeria, but Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam (JNI) is one of them, especially against the back drop of the past and recent developments in Nigeria. For example, when the founder Sir Ahmadu Bello of the organisation was called JNI did not make inflammatory remarks. So also, it refrained from compound problem each time there was religious crisis in Nigeria. In 1966, the assassination of Sir Ahmadu Bello generated serious tension and northern were charged and ready for violence and were only writing for an individual or organisation to call people out for vengeance which JNI could have done but did not.

For example, in a press released in Punch Newspaper by Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam, Muslims in the country were urged to be tolerant and patient even in the face of unnecessary provocation on the interest of peaceful co-existence. The former Secretary General of Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam, Justice AbdulKadri orire (Rtd.) stated this when he was reacting to the violent clashes in the year 2001 in Jos, Plateau State capital. He said that Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam condemned in strongest term the killing in Jos as it also condemned unfortunate situation where worshippers were followed to their places of worship and brutally killed, maimed and butchered while worshipping. He advised Muslims in the country to give peace a chance and live in harmony. He added that Muslims, wherever they may be, should not reach to this situation negatively.

Similarly, Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam, organized a conference on 27th of May 2006 for South and South-East ion how Muslims cemeteries from the authorities absence of proper understanding of the religion of Islam among the indigenes and lack of proper co-ordinance of Islamic activities in those areas bring about disunity among the Muslims.
In view of the above observations the conference resolved as follows:

i) *That the conference appeals to the concerned state government as a matter of fundamental right to accord Muslims in their area, the right to possess lad, employment and appointment.*
ii) *The conference also condemned the bombing of Islamic centre Anofia Atikpo in Ebonyi State and calls on Ebonyi State and calls on Ebonyi State Government and the Federal Government to acts decisively and bring before the law those that had hand in the bombing and the centre be reactivated.*
iii) *The Federal Government, State Government and Islamic organisation are to ensure that a balance educational system of both Islamic and western be made available and accessible to the Muslims populace of that area.*

Furthermore, Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam also preached tolerance and peaceful co-existence between members of Tijaniyyah and Qadriyyah orders whose members used to antagonize each other. An example of such conflicts was the one that happened at Toronke of Sokoto Emirate in 1964 where many people were killed.

The reason was on the standing posture during prayers either Sadlu or Qabdu. Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam resolved the issue, whoever wants to lead prayers should maintain the Sadhu postures and Qabdu to be performed at home by individual who wished to do so.

Today, through the role of the JNI members of Tijaniyyah and Qadriyyah live peacefully in any parts of the country. People are free where to practices sadlu or Qabdu.

Apart from preaching tolerance and peaceful co-existence by Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam, also embarks on conflict resolution among the Muslims in Nigeria. All most all the branches in different states have reconciliatory committee that is in charge of listening and reconciling between Muslims with a view to minimizing the rate at which Muslims washes their dirty liners in public through the court litigation.

Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam is in line with the directive of Allah in the glorious Qur'an:

> *The believers are nothing else than brothers (in Islamic religion). So make reconciliation between your brothers and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy (Q. 49:10). There is no good in most of their secret talks save (in) him who orders sadaqa (charity in Allah's cause) or Ma'ruf (Islamic monotheism and all the good and righteous deeds which Allah has ordained) or reconciliation, between mankind and he who does His, seeking the good pleasure of Allah. we shall give him a great reward (Q. 4:114).*

The committee is mandated to look into so many cases ranging from child custody, marriage dissolutions, inheritance and violation of trust. Even though all the branches of Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam in Northern Nigeria, may be proud of having the committee. However, Kwara State branch of Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam were among branches that has some documents to show that some efforts were made in the area of conflict resolution and reconciliation.

The Sulhu committee of Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam in Ilorin branch, has been able to decide quite a number of cases ranging from inheritance related cases to land matters, child custody and child abuse, juvenile cases and social problem and religions crisis that could have disturbed public peace in the state. The table below shows the summary of some cases as explained by the secretary of Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam, Ilorin Emirate branch 2003-2010.

	Nature/Type of Cases	**Total No. of Cases heard**	**Total No of Cases Resolved**	**%**	**Total No. of Cases yet to be resolved**	**%**
01	Inheritance related cases	20	15	75	05	25
02	Land related cases	10	08	80	02	20
03	Social problem (public disturbance)	05	05	100	-	-
04	Juvenile crime/Child abuse	10	10	100	-	-
05	Child custody	10	06	60	04	40
06	Religious related problem	05	05	100	-	-
	Total	60	41	81.6	11	18.4

A BRIEF ACHIEVEMENT OF JAMAᶜAT NASRIL ISLAM OF NIGERIA

In spite of whatever may be said about the Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam by its critics, it must be admitted that the Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam has achieved a lot in its Islamic activities, just to mention a few.

JNI has created unprecedented awareness in training many of its teachers and preachers so that, Islamic Religious Knowledge could be inculcated in Muslims in order to form a strong front.

JNI brought Tijaniyyah and Qadriyyah orders together to discuss and resolve the issue of Sadlu and Qabdu amicably.

Formation of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs was initiated by the Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam in Kaduna, in 1974 so that, Muslims in Nigeria can speak with one voice and with a common identity.

JNI is the father of several Islamic organisation in the Northern Nigeria. This means that most Islamic organisations are under umbrella of this organisation. The establishment of the Nigeria Aid Group of Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam on 30th October 1975 to help control crowd and the traffic at Muslim ceremonies was one of their achievements.

CONCLUSION

Tolerance is the need of the hour today as it was yesterday, we must emphasise the need for this virtue among us and in the world. We must foster tolerance through deliberate policies and efforts. We should teach our children respect of each other irrespective of caste, creed, gender, nationality and ethnicity, society cannot be governed by law alone. Law has a relation with society. It suffers if society is rigid and intolerant.

It is clear that Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam is an important Islamic organisation in the country. Having examined the various mission and the focus of the organisations. It is safe to conclude that the organisation is achieving profound success in the pursuant of its mission. It is pertinent to recommend to Muslim and Non-Muslim organisations in Nigeria to emulate the Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam style of operation for the peaceful and harmonious co-existence in Nigeria.

References

A one day Unity Conference for South and South East organised by *Jamaᶜat Nasril* Islam. National Headquarters, Kaduna on 27th May, 2006.

A.A. Adekilekun. Selected Islamic Organisation in Nigeria. 1916 – 1986.

Abdul Lateef Adekilekun. Selected Islamic Organisation in Nigeria, 1916 – 1986 (Ilorin: Kewulere Printing Press, 1989) p. 106.

An interview conducted with Justice AbdulKadri Orire (Rtd) at his residence in Ilorin on 22/02/2009

An interview conducted with Mallam Abdullahi Ahmed, the Administrative Secretary *Jamaᶜat Nasril* Islam, Ilorin Emirate at his office in Ilorin on 18th Feb. 2009.

Jamaᶜat Nasril Islam. Understanding sharia in Nigeria. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited. 2001.

John, N. Padan. Ahmadu bello Sardauna of Sokoto (Zaria: Hudahuda Publishing Company, 1986) p. 567

Muhammed Aliyu Kudu "The Role of Jamaᶜat Nasril Islamias and Islamic Organisation". An unpublished B.A. project submitted to the Department of Islamic Studies, University of Sokoto. July 1984.

See Punch Newspaper of Thursday September 13, 2001 (Published in Lagos Nigeria by Punch Newspaper)

The Constitution of the Jamaᶜat Nasril Islamias an Islamic Organisation. An unpublished B.A Project submitted to the Department of Islamic Studies, University of Sokoto. July 1984.

www.biharanjuman.org Mozilla Firefox 18/3/2014

www.islamunveiled.org/eng 17/3/2014

www.islamunveiled.org/eng 20/3/2014

www.al-islam.org/religious-tolerance-islam Mozilla Firefox 18/3/2014

www.suhaibwebb.com 22/3/2014