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THE IDEA OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL LITERARY HERITAGE OF CENTRAL ASIAN THINKERS

Abstract: The article outlines the idea of religious tolerance in the philosophical literary heritage of thinkers of Central Asia.

Key words: religious tolerance, social justice, community, solidarity, cultural and spiritual life, mutual assistance.

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Introduction

A number of researchers note that Central Asian thinkers invested some aspects of the current understanding of “tolerance” in the traditional concept of “bagrykenglik” by that facilitating the possibility of its modern use. This was clearly exposed in one of the primary sources of our socio-philosophical thought “Avesta”, to be more precise, in its religious and philosophical component. It already gives some evidence about the desire of our ancestors to perceive “tolerance” and “generosity” not only from passive positions, but from the point of view of their active implementation, by this representing one of the aspects of the modern interpretation of tolerance. This ideology is clearly seen in Zoroastrianism, which found its expression in the Avesta: “I glorify a good thought, a good word, a good deed”. [1] This statement affirms the need to follow the attitudes and values of goodness not only mentally and verbally, but also to strive in practice and implement them in reality.

The history of the social and philosophical thought of Central Asia goes back to the Middle Ages and is indicative to the successful ideological struggle against religious fanaticism and hostility through international agreement and harmony, solidarity, religious tolerance and mutual trust, the desire for economic and cultural cooperation with peoples of

different confessions. The contribution of theoretical, philosophical, spiritual and moral ideas arisen at that time was enormously huge to achieve certain results in the fields of politics, economics and law. In the history of the socio-philosophical thought of the peoples of Central Asia, the approach to the socio-cultural and moral essence of religion had a rich tradition already at the beginning of the Middle Ages which was based on the view of the socio-economic and cultural-spiritual conditions of the time and the application of its values in real life. The main merit of religion in it, first of all, was to educate people in the spirit of high morality, an exhortation for mutual consent and cooperation, and as a result, all this led to stability, peace and prosperity and harmony among people. The thinkers of Central Asia, put forward the ideas of religious tolerance, as well as agreements between representatives of different confessions blaming religious fanaticism and religious profit motives, which were the driving forces leading to increased feelings, distrust and hostility between peoples and countries. Such a tradition of approaching religion in the Middle Ages was strengthened by an attempt to put those ideas into practice in social, cultural and spiritual life of people.

One of the great thinkers and early Islamic philosophers who consistently developed the idea of establishing peace and harmony between peoples,

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living in cooperation and solidarity, and tried to theoretically and philosophically substantiate that idea, was our compatriot al-Farabi Abu Nasr. He was a supporter of eudaimonism (happiness and welfare), the ideology of human perfection. He used to claim that the essence of human is to be truly blessed with happiness. Continuing his thought, al-Farabi Abu Nasr emphasizes that a person should, first of all, know what happiness is, to turn it into an idea of achievement, to know the ways and means leading to it. In his many works, in particular in his treatises *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City*, also known as *The Perfect State*, *Directing Attention to the Way of Happiness* or *Tanbih* which provides a classification of moral traits such as dignity, happiness and perfection, al-Farabi presented historical and social reasons for the origin of the human community. And he also shows the main reason that people cannot live without each other's help, only cooperation and mutual assistance can be the cause of the emergence of the human community, stability and development of the society. Abu Nasr al-Farabi writes about all this in the following way: "Human, by his/her nature, consists in such a way that s/he needs a lot for his/her existence and to achieve the highest level of perfection. S/he alone cannot achieve all this; for his/her achievement s/he needs a human society. Each member of the community provides him/her with the things that s/he needs and each member of the society is in this position in relation to each other. That's why people achieve the perfection to which they strive through the connection with each other". [2] This means that people through mutual cooperation, consent and mutual assistance satisfy not only their material but also spiritual need, as a result of which each person as well as the whole team of people achieve spiritual perfection. Secondly, the reason people exist collectively, their integration into a human collective community should not be explained by their belonging to any particular race, nation and religion, perhaps it should be explained due to mutual assistance, the need for commonwealth and harmony. Of course, these views of the philosopher are twofold: on the one hand, they represent the main essence of society and an idea that has spiritual and moral significance, showing the place, duty and responsibilities of each member, on the other hand it is an exhortation of people for community and harmony.

Another important spiritual, moral, ideological and political significance of al-Farabi Abu Nasr's ideas about society is that he divides the human community from the point of view of its essence, purpose, and aspiration into a virtuous community. He also claims that their distinguishing fact is not their belonging to any nation and religion, but the relations of these members to mutual cooperation and consent. For example, the philosopher writes about this in the following way: "A virtuous city consists of a group of

people who rely on themselves, healthy by nature, each of them, perceive concepts that can lead them to happiness, and together they go this way through the community. In a virtuous city, the means for mutual interconnection of people and the subject uniting them is a "common view" of "common things", the above-mentioned views themselves have turned into a "common activity", that is, in relation to a single thing, knowledge and action have become a common feature of the city. The people of the city turn into a single being. For the population of the city there is no sense in time and housing, because it is a single whole, since in this situation every "person" in the city devotes his/her whole being to "humanity", in the issue, the chain of dignity will stretch from beginning to eternity. The population of the city will turn into a single whole, like a precious stone, and there will be a system of stages from management to maintenance service". [3] According to al-Farabi Abu Nasr, the importance is that the population of such a community can consist of people belonging to different races, nations, religions, customs and traditions. Because "the population of such a city gather in one place not only on the basis of common kinship, shared housing, the same race and customs. There is nothing in the virtuous city of the above-mentioned factors, or their existence does not mark the advantage or privilege of the city". [4] Moreover, al-Farabi noted the enormous importance that tolerance gains in mastering "the ethical virtues that all other peoples or cities have, or which exist in one nation, in city districts, or even in parts of each district". [5] It assumes that there is an active predisposition of people to each other, that is, tolerance, which lays the foundation for all "ethical virtues". The great philosopher noted the vital role of the formation of appropriate habits in spiritual and moral education. What factor can cause the population's strength of a virtuous city? What is the common factor which unites these people under the name of a single whole "virtuous city"? What factors distinguish the population of the "virtuous city" from other communities or cultural groups? Answering these questions, the philosopher wrote as follows: "Any racial kinship, hereditary, common leadership, agreement, customs and cultural community sharing the same language, life in one territory, victory over other tribes and other factors can cause unification under the name of one nation, but all this is a sign of ignorance and malevolence. A significant difference between a virtuous city and other cities is that it contains divine enlightenment and its chains of spiritual conviction, as well as respect for human morality and dignity". [6]

Al-Farabi's philosophy is a theoretical basis for proving that hatred, war and strife in no race, nation or religion have a historical, social, cultural and spiritual root. The true dignity of any society is not its economic and military power, but the achievement of

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knowledge, human morality and dignity by the citizens of this society.

Al-Farabi Abu Nasr compares the virtuous city (state) with the body of a healthy person. All parts of the body are in strong cooperation and help each other to ensure health and perfection, as well as residents of a virtuous city (state) are interconnected with each other. Each of them has a specific position and performs a specific task. [7] In his work, al-Farabi claims that achieving happiness is in their own hands, that is, the key to achieving contentment is a person's sharp mind, a broad outlook etc.; it is when the positive features such as quick-wittedness, resourcefulness prevails in him/her, and s/he does not give freedom to his/her passions and desires. The philosopher describes people from the careerist and power lover city - opposite to the noble city, as follows: "The population of such a city wants all the peoples to obey the government, and the government itself does not subordinate anyone. All their thoughts are aimed at glorifying victories and conquests". [8] The thinker criticizes people who bring injustice and damage the peace and tranquility of other peoples, and notes that these are the most harmful flaws in the way people achieve their happiness. "The cities whose religious beliefs are based on a superstitious, erroneous worldview, we call ignorant or erring cities". [9] Al-Farabi begins the 34th chapter of the work with this phrase: "The opinions of the people of a virtuous city" and argues that some creatures seek to fight against other opposing creatures in order to protect themselves and preserve their bloodline of extinction. To cause damage to the lives of people living in peace and tranquility, causeless blood shedding and arousal of various religious conflicts among peoples is a grave sin. The philosopher in his works speaks a lot about the need to establish peace and stability among peoples, living in mutual agreement and solidarity. These ideas of Abu Nasr al-Farabi on tolerance, peace and harmony have great socio-philosophical significance.

The socio-political importance of al-Farabi's thoughts is very relevant and actual today in that, where the principles of tolerance and harmony are stable, there arises comprehensively strong socio-political stability in the society. Such an occurrence opens the way to the economic and spiritual development of the society. The theoretical confirmation of this factor by the head of the state Sh. Mirziyoev requires special attention: "Today, the representatives of more than 130 nations and nationalities live as a single family in the country. United by the goal of the prosperity of our common home - Uzbekistan, they selflessly work in all spheres and industries and make worthy contributions to the establishment of a legal democratic state with developed market economy and a strong civil society". [10]

Introducing the philosophical thoughts of al-Farabi into the process of socio-political and cultural-spiritual changes that are currently taking place in our country, in particular, in the context of the revival of national and religious values, it becomes clear that the groundlessness from political point of view and the ideas to "import" Islam from outside, it is just an attempt to give it a political connotation. Therefore, the introduction of the philosopher's above-mentioned ideas into the mentality of the citizens of our republic serves to ensure socio-political stability in our multinational country, and also has great ideological and political significance in the fight against wahabbists (members of Islamic religious movement) and other inflammatory terrorist groups seeking to poison the people's consciousness with ideas of fundamentalism and extremism. In this case, it is necessary to pay great attention to the following words of President Sh.M. Mirziyoev: "Considering that today the threats of such extremely dangerous phenomena as religious extremism, terrorism, drug addiction, human trafficking, illegal migration, "mass culture" are constantly growing, we further understand the true meaning of these words. Indeed, upbringing in the spirit of national and universal values remains a matter for us that have never lost its relevance and significance". [11]

The aforementioned ideas of the philosopher have been of great importance for the country that has given refuge to the representatives of many nations and nationalities, as well as people of different confessions. Al-Farabi's immortal philosophical ideas, above all, are an ideological appeal mobilizing political stability and socio-economic development; on the other hand, they can be a weapon in the fight against danger to great state chauvinism and aggressive nationalism, serving as an ideological and political source in the emergence of religious fundamentalism and terrorism.

Like Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, often known in the west as Avicenna, one of the great thinkers and writers of the Islamic Golden Age, originally presented such social phenomena as solidarity, mutual commonwealth, harmony, freedom, which are the desire of each individual to protect himself/herself. The collective formation will become stable on the basis of mutual assistance and the principles of the community of its members. "If there is a conflict between them, then let each of them perceive justice, useful to all members of the collective society and injustice will be understood as harmful to the members of the community". [12]

Another well-known thinker of his time, Abu Raikhan al-Beruni gives historical information about the fact that in our country, located on the Great Silk Road, national and religious tolerance has been highly developed in the nature of the people. In his works he wrote about the existence of Jewish residential quarters, a Christian church, blocks of houses etc.

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where a number of diverse nationalities such as Arabs, Indians, Chinese and Slavic peoples lived altogether in Urgench (Khoresm) a thousand years ago. According to al-Beruni, people united in a community with the specific goal of living together and in safety in order to help each other to create the necessary things for life, to protect themselves from all sorts of troubles. The main reason for the emergence of the human collective community is mutual assistance, compassion and unanimity. At the same time, al-Beruni, as a humane thinker, says that such a situation and order subsequently collapsed as a result of various robberies, morale and enmity. For instance, in his work “Minerology” the philosopher writes the following: “A person’s needs are so diverse that s/he alone cannot satisfy all of them. To satisfy all the needs there is no enough assistance. The needs are different, and there are a lot of them. Only with the help of a small community of several people they can be satisfied. For this reason, people have to create cities”. [13] The scientist also confirms his thoughts in his work “Geodesy”: “The diversity of human needs and the inadequacy to keep oneself away from them, the small number of means of self-defense, the multiplicity of enemies made people unite with family ties in the society where each member is in a mutual assistance relationship and is engaged in the work of satisfying their own and other needs”. [14]

One of the main concerns that serve to uncover the ideological significance of al-Beruni’s spiritual heritage and worldview on the analyzed issue is, first of all, the identification of what the scientist understood by religion. The researchers A.B. Kholidov and B.T. Erman express their opinions about this idea: “Abu Raikhan al-Beruni, on the basis of the views of that time, gives wide significance to religion and understands it as an element of spiritual life; even he considers religion to be the branches (parts) of the practical life of man”. [15]

Also, if we keep in mind the thought that there were many prominent figures in Central Asia who embodied their religious views with legislative knowledge the valid conclusions of the aforementioned researchers will become obvious to a certain extent. Forasmuch, an encyclopedic scientist, al-Beruni, who always sought to find the scientific and historical basis of current events and relations in the society, perhaps, at that time he was able to make sure that all aspects and spheres of life are embodied in religion, in particular, the Islamic religion. Hostility, conflict and bloody wars that arose on the basis of religious dogmatism were sharply criticized by the scientist. He, arguing, approaches religious dogmatism and regulations from the point of view of the mind, calls for an objective assessment of the pursued aim and the spiritual essence of other religions. The philosopher as a scientist-humanist sharply criticizes the preference of one people over another and the idea of opposing each other.

It is obvious that the thinker considers the national and religious restriction to be contradictory to the human mind, incorrigible stupidity and ignorance. From the foregoing ideas it is clear that respect and tolerance towards the representatives of other nations are inherent in our people. Tolerance has its ancient traditions, as well as its theoretical and philosophical foundations visibly manifested in the works of Abu Nasr al-Farabi, al-Beruni and other thinkers of the early Middle Ages.

Such traditions that took place in the socio-economic and cultural-spiritual life of the peoples of Central Asia were continued by such thinkers and philosophers as Khoja Akhmad Yasawi, Rumi, Jami and Alisher Navoi in the follow-up stage of the Renaissance. Under the influence of the emerging socio-political and cultural-spiritual conditions, in their own way they thrived to interpret the ideas of their ancestors about the reason for the emergence of human communities for the prosperity of the society and they, first of all, glorified about the cessation of wars and extermination between countries, hostility between religions, conflicts and disputes between people. Furthermore, in their beautiful art episodes and samples, they described the desired society based on commonwealth, consent, and agreement between people without conflicts and hostility and where the social justice was a top priority.

Like previous thinkers and philosophers, Khoja Akhmad Yasawi paid great attention to religion and always urged people to be tolerant of people of a different faith. Hikmets (wise thoughts) of Yasawi not only preached Islam, but also called on Turkic-speaking peoples to spiritual unity and sovereignty.

In the works of another thinker, Rumi, although there is no hatred of evil, but only dispraise, there was no call for any activity and struggle, but a call for self-improvement. Through his religious mysticism, the poet and mystic glorifies respect for other people, the brotherhood of people, communities and races, compassion for a person in trouble and mutual assistance.

The philosophical views of the famous poet and scientist Abdurakhman Jami also exalt the ideas of justice and humanism. His well-known work “Bakharistan” is invaluable in that it includes eternal morals, everlasting wisdom calling for faith, purity, justice, love and gives generosity and spirituality to those who still honor his works.

Alisher Navoi has been famous among the Eastern peoples as a great statesman and poet. In his moral and philosophical views, he masterly expressed loads of thoughts about the essence of human and the world. In the sixteenth chapter of his work “Khairat ul-Abror” (“Wonders of good people”), Alisher Navoi, speaking of a “humane person”, gives the following definition for a person: it is a person who “no matter how much suffering s/he has had, remains faithful, with patience endures various trials and

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difficulties and does not wish evil to anyone”. Besides this, in his works Navoi highlights such categories as friendship and harmony, justice and tranquility. Calling on people to enlightenment, the thinker criticizes people with malevolent intentions and as a proof brings the following lines: *A person can do any deeds, but only with the help of his/her mind a person can control his/her actions.* [16]

These poetic lines are dedicated to the fact that a person is capable of doing all kinds of things, good and evil, courageous and vile, fair and ignorant etc. If a person does any deeds with the mind, then s/he forms in himself/herself wonderful moral qualities. Alisher Navoi was for friendship, harmony, mutual respect between people of other nations which is evidenced by the following lines: “People of the whole earth, try to understand that enmity is a bad deed. Live in friendship with each other, there is no better destiny”. [17]

The thinkers and philosophers of the aforementioned times could present a series of advanced ideas on the issue of war and express the idea of justice in terms of the historical period of history and ideas. They worried not only about their people and their homeland, but also cared about the happiness and tranquility of other peoples, while remaining devoted to the ideas of humanity and concern for the people.

Thus, it can be determined that during the development of socio-philosophical thought in Central Asia, the spiritual heritage reflected the ideas of goodness, the equality of all citizens in the society, the community of races and nationalities, spiritual and universal values that form social and moral qualities in the context of tolerance .

Based on the analysis of these studies and on the basis of their specific historical and philosophical material, in this case the current status and possibilities of using traditions in which the number of problems have been developed related to religious tolerance in the socio-philosophical heritage.

Other authors have repeatedly addressed the study of certain aspects of the traditions of determining tolerance in the history of social and philosophical thought, in particular, in their reports at scientific conferences they raised the issues of general

problems of tolerance, its place and status in the modern world, including our country. All this is quite enough to assert with full confidence that the socio-philosophical heritage of our people, along with the involvement of traditions of understanding tolerance from the history of other peoples of the world, is one of the effective factors in the socio-moral development of the Uzbek people in the context of tolerance. Sh.S. Agzamkhodzhaeva writes about the great educational opportunities of tolerance in its ethical embodiment: “In the system of advanced philosophical, ethical views of Central Asian thinkers, a person is considered as the highest creation, and the value of the world and everything in it is determined by the measure of humanity. Human, his dignity, happiness, humanism, nobility, tolerance - all this was put at the forefront issues in the works of thinkers of Central Asia”. [18]

The true essence of the Islamic religion is that religion discredits ignorance, protects against various dogmatic ideas, and restrains adherence to religious differences. In the scientific heritage, philosophical teachings of our great thinkers, the great attention has been paid to the creation of the concepts of tolerance and patience in the Eastern style, when it comes to relations in social life, relations between the state and religion. The main essentiality of their concepts about the principles of tolerance and interethnic good neighborliness has been interpreted in direct connection with the spiritual, psychological state of a person. At the same time, in their scientific heritage there are various comments on the works of thinkers of the ancient period. Also in their writings one can find numerous theories, stories and legends that promote friendly cooperation, love and kindness, religious tolerance, harmony between representatives of different nations and nationalities. Exploring these aspects, our great ancestors systematized their conceptual ideas, which have not lost their ideological value at the present time.

Thus, the main idea of our thinkers and philosophers is that they tried to show the magnificent dignity of the individual and his/her liberation. They did not oppose one people to another, because all people were equal before the law of the society.

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