

Speech of

H.E. Prof. Dr. Pirzada Qasim Raza Siddiqui *

It is an occasion of extreme pleasure and blessings to be amongst you and it is certainly an honour to address this august gathering of renowned scholars and researchers from all over the world and worthy Vice Chancellor of universities as well, who have gathered here today to share their ideas on one of the most important and burning issues the Muslim Ummah faces at present. The purpose of this conference is to bring together different religious sects closer for enhancing Tolerance, Peace and Harmony among them and to present the true picture of Islam and Pakistan worldwide. This is indeed a sacred purpose and warrants our full attention and wholehearted and sensible endeavors to reach its practical solution.

Today, the Muslim culture/civilization is suffering from the consequences of religious conflicts. It has become plagued by certain intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting both inter and intra-faith harmony and tolerance. The religious bigotry, extremism, the demons of suspicion, ignorance and intolerance is marring the benign image of Islam and Muslim and portraying them as despised, violent and extremist community/religion. Intolerance and extremism fly in the face of the sacredness of true religious purpose. Interfaith harmony and dialogue has become an urgent necessity to dispel and obliterate this image and misconception in these circumstances, hence warrants special attention from the scholars and intellectuals to sit together and focus on identifying the root causes and offering the possible solutions in order to explore

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importance of promoting religious dialogue and cooperation and would suggest ways and means to shun these conflicts, intolerance.

In my humble view emphasis should be made that the common roots of religion and faith all come from a source that "prescribes good and encourages forgiveness and love". Interfaith dialogue has become an urgent necessity and through mutual dialogue we can fight "the demons of suspicion, ignorance and contempt for people of other cultures".

I sincerely hope that research findings, discussions are expected to generate very valuable recommendations to serve as guidelines to develop and promote religious tolerance and interfaith harmony.