

# Need for Religious Harmony in the Globalized World

## Abstract

It is necessity of time to promote the new concept of religious harmony so as to meet the challenges posed by religious diversity in a modern globalized world. On the basis of recognizing religious diversity and differences, all religions must enhance mutual understanding and empathy through dialogue, shoulder the common responsibility of upholding peace and justice through cooperation, and inter-religious harmony and harmony between the religious community and the whole society. It is imperative to promote the principle of "harmony without uniformity" and learn to respect each other and jointly shoulder social responsibilities. The use of religion for wrong purposes should be opposed and religious extremism should be guarded against.

**Keywords:** Religious Diversity, Religious Harmony, Uniformity, Pluralistic, Global Harmony.

## Introduction

"There never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion; there never existed many religions, there is only the one. One Infinite Religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist, and this Religion is expressing itself in various countries, in various ways."

**Swami Vivekananda<sup>1</sup>**

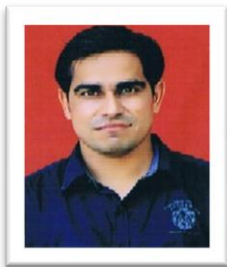
Religious harmony is the sine qua non of a pluralistic society such as ours. Guarding and strengthening this core ideal, upon which our policy is based, requires ceaseless vigilance. Nearly six hundred years ago, the saint Kabir blended the mystic aspects of the various religious traditions of our country, and provided to later generations a sense of what we would today call Unity in Diversity. Among his many luminous 'dohas', Kabir had urged each of us to find within ourselves the spark of goodness or genius to inspire everyone.

The Constitution of India is committed to preserve, promote and defend the secular, pluralistic, socialist and democratic values. But unfortunately the polity of the country, perused power politics of hate and misinformation campaign for electoral gains, resulting in divisive politics of setting one community against the others. Never has been the question of communal disharmony and social disintegration raised to such a wide range of emotions as of today. Communal tensions in India has been mounting year after and fundamental and anti national groups are engaging themselves to reap the harvest of hatred among the communities by encouraging the politics of vote banks at the cost of nation's disintegration<sup>2</sup>.

Communal disharmony and conflicts are fuelled by fear, suspicion and hatred. It depends on local conditions whether the division expresses itself along religious, economic, political, caste or color lines. Whatever be the form, insecurity is perhaps the major cause of individual and social dissensions. The societies, individuals and specially youth must rise above fear, jealousy and hate. When such individuals combine themselves into a community, the problem of communal jealousy and discord will disappear. The positive assertive role of both majority and minority communities to lessen the fear, hatred and suspicion is essential to generate communal harmony.

One of the main problems about religion is its diversity. Not only there are several religions but they differ from one another in many ways. Further each claims to show the right way of life, each claims to provide supreme peace and fulfillment. Diversity of religion however is not merely a philosophical problem. It has immense social, cultural and political consequences. Differences among religions have been one of the main causes of wars and communal history all through human history<sup>3</sup>.

At present we are living in age of corruptions, greed, conflicts, violence & terrorism, which is known as 'Kali Yuga' i.e. Age of darkness & impurities, which is an extremely explosive troubled times where the context of human life is changing every moment. The problems faced by



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humanity are many but the most pressing are or the problems of meeting the basic needs of the vast majority of the people removal of illiteracy and the gap between the rich and poor. Can we overcome these crises through a focus on human values and ethics? Yes, we can by some changes in the way we live and the way we think. There is a transition from 'Vasudheva Kutumbkam' to globalization, which has changed the concept of values in present day education system & in the society. The present world is faced with many urgent problems – such as political, economical, educational, social & cultural problems due to deteriorations of values. Human values (cultural, moral & spiritual values) are eroding at very fast rate resulting in declining the quality of life of the people. At the dawn of the new millennium, what is required most is 'Jainism philosophy & Values of Nonviolence & Non-Possession for Self-development, business survival & growth. In the age of globalization, we have to reaffirm faith in Indian ethos. The ethical principles of Jainism prescribe a code of conduct, which requires an individual to be an ideal person with nonviolence as the foundation of his life not only from the Indian context but also universally in this 21st century To meet these challenges & to save the humanity from further destruction we have to change our attitude from 'Culture of Materialism' to 'Culture of Spiritualism,' & we have to change our attitude of possession to non-possession<sup>4</sup>.

Jainism- India's greatest spiritual gift to the world! Jainism is one of the world's oldest religions, which is originating in India, dates before 3000 B.C. Jainism has been rightly called ethical religion, which is applicable and relevant today as it was 2500 years ago. It lays great stress on good conduct. Jainism was made into a popular religion by Mahavira (599 BC), the 24th Thirthankara of Jainism. "Hatred and conflict are often rooted in differences between people of different races and religions. We all need to respect people of different races as well as people of different faiths and religions. We need to unite by recognizing our common desire and need for a harmonious society- a society in which we and our children and families and friends and communities can all live our lives in peace and harmony. Regardless of our race or religion, we all want and need such social harmony." "Without respect for people of different races or ethnicities or religions, how can we have a peaceful and harmonious society or world? And without a harmonious society, how can there be the necessary economic development and atmosphere conducive to spiritual happiness and self-realization?" What is religion? Religion is a great force the only real motive force in the world<sup>5</sup>. There is a common misconception that religion means ritualistic religion and nothing else. The word religion actually means laws, both natural and moral, that ensure right living. Religion stands for an integral development of the personality, a comprehensive view of life. Only human species has the ability to transmit information and knowledge from one generation to the next. This ability has given man his cherished civilization and culture. An enquiring mind naturally seeks for an order, for a unifying principal behind the apparent diversity. It is well known that faith infuses energy and grit, without which

no worthwhile progress in any field of activity is possible. Today we all are at the verge of atomic destruction and when everybody is busy in the mad rat race of materialistic pursuit, religious harmony will be a relief. We should make an effort to peep into the prominent religions of the world and find out a secular message for the mankind. Our aim should be to enlighten and educate the masses about all the religions, so that the message of universal brotherhood is spread throughout the world. Incarnations, Saints, Prophets and Sages have appeared in different parts of the world from time to time in order to teach men how to live in harmony. These great souls, on the basis of personal experience explained the essential ideals and values in life and taught how they can be achieved. In addition to their moral and spiritual teachings, almost all the religious teachers and reformers of the world gave out a plan and a system of their own on which human society would best be organized. It was thus that every faith helped to establish customs and conventions, with rites and rituals, amongst the communities of mankind and gave birth to a particular type of civilization and culture which naturally differed from others. This is how different religions came into existence. Religion plays a very crucial and central role in everyone's life. Religion guides us to the path of honesty, integrity, high morals and inspires us to live a righteous life. Many people around the world are driven by their religion to keep themselves away from bad deeds and do good things. But a closer look at the history of the world teaches us that the religion has been misused by many people for their own vested interest. These people divide the society in name of religion, caste and creed for their own vested interest. Religious intolerance in the society has created many problems. Millions of people have been killed in riots; many people are discriminated every day because of their religion; many nations have been divided on the religious lines and created discord in the world<sup>6</sup>.

Religious harmony holds the key to a peaceful and progressive world. Religious harmony is the need of the hour because we are the children of the same God. The holy books of various religions are filled with divine knowledge; if we are religiously tolerant and study these holy books and practice in our daily life then our world can be a lot better. Our world is a diverse one where people of different religion are spread across many nations. A religious group may be in majority in some areas and minority in other area. Religious harmony is important to ensure the safety of people in the diverse society. Global Harmony requires that all human-beings on the Earth to be in unison or in complete agreement. At the root of all clashes in opinions at the level of civilization, there are multiple and conflicting ideologies or view-points. When all these view-points are wrong or if any one side is wrong, then struggle among them is inevitable. If all sides are right, in that state struggle is not possible. We humans are in unison when "right", and divided when "wrong". We need to be in unison for "right" to be able to make any progress for global harmony. Global harmony is not possible through invasion or by use of force. It is not possible by way of agitation or protesting against

authorities and developed countries either. However, global harmony is possible and realizable through understanding of co-existence. This understanding of co-existence can be developed in every human-being by way of education. With understanding of co-existence, it becomes clear that existential purpose of all human beings is one and the same which is to realize resolution, prosperity, fearlessness (trust), and co-existence. The education on the bases of idealism or materialism has not been able to produce any solid or decisive action plan for global harmony. The prevalent illusion and ignorance in humankind is from modern education's maniacal tendencies of consumption, sex, and profit, its teaching instability indefiniteness of principles of science, and making social, economic, and judiciary systems accordingly. Education based on these two ideologies has increased exploitation of Nature, crimes with Earth, pollution in environment, economic disparity, and communal consciousness to such a degree that people have started expressing the risk of whole humankind getting wiped out<sup>7</sup>.

Education is required, education of peace that would act as the panacea for all crisis and evils that are prevailing in this world. Education is a significant dimension of the long term process of building up peace, tolerance, justice, intercultural understanding and civic responsibility. The global crisis that we are all now facing is a reflection of the education system that has promoted worldviews that overlook genuine moral and spiritual issues, and emphasises rationality, individualism and competition. The values and assumptions underlying these worldviews have a direct impact on the institutions of society, which then act to reinforce each other. Our educational approach is to challenge these worldviews and the underlying values and assumptions which inform them, through the promotion of critical self-awareness along with awareness of social structures. We do this through strategies and processes to acknowledge and transform the negative roots behind these worldviews within ourselves and then in wider society, which brings about a transformation in how we perceive and then act in the world. This is education for change. Recognizing that young people have an inner voice that calls them to fulfill a personal yearning to be relevant in a world that is confusing and in disarray. It is more evident than ever before that young people are the major force of the future. Their presence is being heard around the world and their numbers are growing exponentially in all countries of the world. It is up to us as educators to help these young people to discover the "authentic self" and support their efforts in redesigning systems that no longer are effective in a global society. If we do not heed this outcry now there will only be more violence and upheaval without focused goals. Most of the major actions in today's world take place due to religion, may they be positive or negative no one can deny the importance or the very existence of religion in today's world. Everybody has a million views when it comes to religion. From the hardcore ultras to the atheist, everyone has their say in this matter. The world is covered mainly under 4 big religions that is Christianity, Muslims, Hindu's n Buddhists and then there are other small religions and

the rest are antireligious people. Every religion has its own set of beliefs and ideologies and this is where all the difference is created. With god being separated in all of them in their own unique way there is no central belief in god anymore, people see god in their own and not necessarily in the others. There is a major difference in practices, rituals, traditions and in simple words the whole way of living. Everyone has history and stories of certain and uncertain events to back up the beliefs of their own religion. Religion has become so important that you might or might not get to see a country just because of the religion you belong to.<sup>8</sup> The concept of "Religion" connotes a belief in a supreme being and his worship through a specified ritual. Religion is based on a moralistic outlook or a way of life. In its doctrine perspective, it may be defined as a system of general truths which has the effect of transforming characters when they are sincerely held and vividly apprehended. The concept of harmony connotes a consistent, orderly, or pleasing arrangement of parts; congruity. India's ethnic composition encompasses myriad streams of culture and religious faiths and sects. As a multi-lingual and multi-cultured society, India has served as an outstanding example of unity in diversity among the fast maturing democracies across the world<sup>9</sup>.

Cultural diversity as a major component of secularism has been widely recognized and acknowledged in the recent past throughout the world when many countries have suffered ethnic violence and constant conflicts of faiths and beliefs. Today an already well-built cultural diversity of India needs constant the legacies of our saints and leaders remain a living source of inspiration for the youth of today. These luminaries desired to see India emerge as a lasting identity of communal harmony nourishment and it is in this respect that a great responsibility is thrust upon the youth of India today. These components of Indian society have been attacked frequently, especially in recent times by divisive fascist forces, which are bent upon upsetting the social fabric of a peace loving and fastidiously growing democratic society. The young minds therefore must know that the traditions of communal harmony and tolerance and respect for diversity have always been the redeeming features of our civilization. Communal harmony is the sine qua non of a pluralistic society such as ours. Guarding and strengthening this core ideal, upon which our policy is based, requires ceaseless vigilance.

Nearly six hundred years ago, the saint Kabir blended the mystic aspects of the various religious traditions of our country, and provided to later generations a sense of what we would today call Unity in Diversity. Among his many luminous 'dohas', Kabir had urged each of us to find within ourselves the spark of goodness or genius to inspire everyone. He wrote:

'Jaisay til mein tel hai, jyon chakmak mein aag,  
Tera saayin tujh mein hai, tu jaag sakay to jaag.'

The emergence of certain interest groups that do not shun violence and seem to be inspired by a particular religious ideology has tempted many religion is often viewed today as having a negative role in world politics, particularly in cases where a religious revival is perceived to be taking place. After

decades during which religion seemed to be largely and effectively relegated to the private realm, religious activists are staking out a new claim for religion as a central feature of public life. The wish to restore religion to what is considered its rightful place at the heart of society is the most notable common denominator of today's religious fundamentalist movements. In order to achieve their aim, members of such movements may employ several tactics, including violent ones. They justify their use of violence by reason, often referring to a perception that we are not living in normal times, and that exceptional circumstances ask for exceptional measures. As a result, an unusual alliance has been forged in many cases between religion and politics<sup>10</sup>.

The emergence of certain interest groups that do not shun violence and seem to be inspired by a particular religious ideology has tempted many observers, notably in the West, to assume an intrinsic connection between religion and violence. Hence, it is common today to consider religion as a source of conflict rather than a resource for peace. The logical conclusion then is to try and reduce the influence of the religious factor in the political arena. Typically in such a view, religion is deemed to be a private affair, something between individual beliefs and their god's), a relation that should not spill over into the public domain. Whereas religion is expected to limit itself exclusively to regulating human relations between the visible and invisible worlds, it is politics, on the other hand, which is deemed solely responsible for regulating their relations with the state that they live in. The formal separation between the fields of religion and politics has been the hallmark of Western democracies for centuries and was introduced to other parts of the world, notably those which were colonized by Europe, and by extension, countries that were long under the influence of Western Europe and North-America. The worldwide resurgence of religion is increasingly seen as challenging the basis of secular state. Many commentators, at least in the West, have lamented the fact that religion is reassuming a public role, bringing together again two fields of operation that in the Western tradition of the enlightenment have long been kept apart. Due to recent conflicts in which religion also played a role, and notably after the events of September 2001, religion is often associated in the West with violence. The question is, however, are we simply dealing here with religious conflict, as is so often suggested, or has religion become a suitable instrument for political mobilization, providing a resource that-like any other- can be effectively exploited for rather mundane purposes. For anybody to answer that question, it is of vital importance to analyze the role of religion in society, and to do so from a historical perspective. This is important, first to be able to understand today's world better, and second, in order to analyze the specific properties, and therefore the potential of religion<sup>11</sup>.

But a closer look at the history of the world teaches us that the religion has been misused by many people for their own vested interest. These people divide the society in name of religion, caste and creed for their own vested interest. Religious intolerance in the society has created many

problems— millions of people have been killed in riots; many people are discriminated every day because of their religion; many nations have been divided on the religious lines and created discord in the world<sup>12</sup>.

Religions of the world have contributed to the loss of social harmony, often because there are simply so many of them and they seem at variance with one another. The distrust and conflict between religions is sad and strange. Considering the fact that all religions deal with the same basic human problems, we would expect the world's religions to be in the forefront of promoting harmony—not only among themselves but also at every level of society. Sometimes religions do work together to promote harmony, but the harmony that is achieved is too fragile to withstand disruptive social forces. The oldest religious sentiment ever expressed is perhaps the statement on religious harmony found in the ancient Vedas: Ekam sat, vipra bahudha vadanti, "Truth is one; sages call it by various names."

Yet despite these broad, universal sentiments expressed by enlightened beings from different religious traditions, the simple but tragic truth is that humanity as a whole has not yet come to terms with religious plurality. Faith traditions other than one's own are frequently seen as threats. Religious differences still rankle and continue to produce disharmony, misunderstanding, and mutual distrust.

Therefore, Religious harmony is a must in 21st Century. People fighting on the name of religion should be made understand that religion must be studied on a broader basis than formerly. All narrow, limited, fighting ideas of religion have to go. All sect ideas and tribal or national ideas of religion must be given up. That each tribe or nation should have its own particular God, and think that every other is wrong, is a superstition that should belong to the past. All such ideas must be abandoned.

Religious harmony holds the key to a peaceful and progressive world. Religious harmony is the need of the hour because we are the children of the same God. The holy books of various religions are filled with divine knowledge; if we are religiously tolerant and study these holy books and practice in our daily life then our world can be a lot better. Our world is a diverse one where people of different religion are spread across many nations – a religious group may be in majority in some areas and minority in other area. Religious harmony is important to ensure the safety of people in the diverse society.

At the same time, saying that every religion has its own uniqueness does not mean that religions have nothing to share with one another. There are a great many things to share and learn, and if we really put our minds to this, we shall find that the religions of the world have a lot more in common than we suspect. In spite of the diversity and the differences, no one can deny that religions do share certain common characteristics such as concern for the existential problems of humanity, transcendence, ultimacy, holiness, fellowship, and the symbolic expression of inner experience. The harmonious approach consists in recognizing this common ground and enriching our own spiritual life by absorbing the best elements of other religions while remaining steadfast in our own. Ramakrishna, a nineteenth-

century Indian saint, is perhaps the best-known symbol of the harmonious approach. Both through his life and teachings he showed that it is possible to remain faithful to one's own faith while opening one's heart to the inspiration that comes from other faiths. It is possible to be aware of the harmony underlying all religions but maintain a special relationship with one's own.

What we need today is a conscious effort to see the thread connecting all religions, forming a beautiful garland adorning the Supreme Being, who is neither a Christian, nor a Jew, nor a Muslim, nor a Buddhist, nor a Hindu, nor belonging to any religion whatsoever. All belong to Him, but He transcends all. Let's work together to create religious harmony in our world by knowing and practicing our own religion ; respecting other religions ; integrating closely with the people of different faith and believes , not interfering in the religious matter of other people . We all should follow the concept of Vasudaivkutumbam which means that "all men should shun envy and malice and should live life with mutual love and affection and thus build an ideal society."

The society and the state is made up of individual, it is the individual who gives effect to laws and policies. Every individuals mirror his society. In tackling religious intolerance, a concerted effort must be geared towards individual enlightenment on the imperative of religious harmony. Violations of human rights often start with individual before it becomes a collective phenomenon. When individuals accept the norms of both democratic and human rights principles and strive to live it, then the state and human rights agencies will have less work to do. It is trite at this juncture to stress a social disease which has exacerbated religious crisis in recent times i.e. Racism. Racism is the theory or idea that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and certain traits of personality, intellect or culture and combined with it, the notion that some races are inherently superior to others. While, it is accepted that in nearly all the world's societies, men have apparently developed pride in the cultural accomplishment of their own groups and a corresponding derogation of those of their neighbors. However, the idea that certain groups of people are superior to others because of their genetic makeup does not appear to have been widespread. The menace of Racism and Religious fundamentalism is a backlash of colonial expansion and slavery. While, many states have gained independence, and are no longer subjects of other nations, what starves us now is reaction to perceived earlier grievance, which has now metamorphosed to terrorism. Solving the scourge of racism, religious fundamental and terrorism is the work of all. The whole world must unite in condemning acts inimical to human rights, but we also must be part of the healing process. No one thinks, this fight will be easy, but it our belief that Religious Harmony can be achieved in the 21st century and beyond.

Tolerance and respect Tolerance and respect are two vital words that should be borne in mind in a multi-religious society. One should not only preach tolerance but try, on every possible occasion, to put into practice the benign spirit of tolerance as this spirit would go a long way in creating an

atmosphere leading to peace and harmony. We may not understand or appreciate the intrinsic values of certain religious rituals or practices carried out by certain co-religionists. Similarly, others may not be in a position to understand or appreciate our own rituals or practices. If we do not want others to ridicule our actions, we should not ridicule others. We should try to fathom or understand the practices which are foreign to us as it will help to create a better understanding, thus enhancing the spirit of tolerance amongst the followers of the multi-religious denominations.

All over the world, religion holds a primal place. Every man is said to believe in a 'god'. Ordinarily there should be no feud in matter of religion, because religion is a personal decision. However, in recent times religion has become an issue and many crimes are committed on the basis of faith. In the 21st century, with the promotion of human rights; this ought not to be so. Whether we realize it now or not, religion plays a very crucial role in the affairs of our nation. Unfortunately, religious issues are deliberately avoided even when our collective future is being threatened by unfounded misunderstanding and suspicion of each other. As religious people, instead of being our "brothers' keepers" we have rather opted to be our "brothers' killers" and this is widening the gap for atheism and secularism to destroy our nation.

It is impossible to have one religion for the whole world; just as it is impossible of having just one medicine for all the illnesses. We need several religious traditions in the world to have a cultural diversity; just like we can have several medicines for a single illness. But what is important is we develop a mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation for all the religions. Interreligious cooperation will reduce the present unnecessary struggle and competition. This will enable and help the various religious group not only the differences between them but also universal values taught by all religions and strong ethical values. All religions promote the same practice of love, forgiveness, tolerance, self-discipline, moral principle, truth and justice. We need to promote religious cooperation and not religious competition. We should have a special day as "Interreligious Day" where all religious people come together to appreciate and celebrate the common Creator.

Competition is of two kinds, one positive and the other negative. Positive competition is where an individual is aspired to be the best without creating any obstacles for others. There would not be any progress without competition. While negative kind of competition is one where the individual aspired to be the best, he also created obstacles for others. Religion is often viewed today as having a negative role in world politics, particularly in cases where a religious revival is perceived to be taking place. The wish to restore religion to what is considered its rightful place at the heart of society is the most notable common denominator of today's religious fundamentalist movements. In order to achieve their aim, members of such movements may employ several tactics, including violent ones. They justify their use of violence by reason, often referring to a perception that we are not living in normal times, and

that exceptional circumstances ask for exceptional measures. As a result, an unusual alliance has been forged in many cases between religion and politics. Hence, it is common today to consider religion as a source of conflict rather than a resource for peace contradicting its prime motive of emergence and existence.

Recently, there has been introduction of Islamic Banking. Also, there have been news efforts by the Christian Association to promote Christian Banking. These should not be seen from perspectives of competition between Islam, Christianity or any other religion but rather a battle for non-profit banking against the present capitalist for-profit banking. We should have secular non-profit banking systems, where the profits made are shared by all stakeholders including customers and shareholders; instead of the present model where faithful customers are exploited for the benefit of shareholders.

It was still understandable when there was conflict over money or power, but conflict over religion was not understandable because the very purpose of religion was to create inner peace. Most conflicts in the name of religion are actually not based on religious faith but because of power and money. Most of the misunderstandings over religions are on account of the lack of awareness about other religions.

With the advent of globalization, the world is transformed into a global village. People everywhere talk about money and material value. To a certain extent money is important. But material wealth provides only physical comfort; mental comfort is possible only by faith. A disturbed mind is very bad for health, while a healthy mind and healthy body go together. As rightly said, "Health is wealth", so it is very important for every individual to create inner peace by practicing love and compassion in daily life. Practicing this is not only important from the perspective of individual but also from the perspective of nation and world as whole for its smooth and efficient functioning in the pursuit of growth. Thus, we should try and reduce the influence of the religious factor in the political arena. Typically in such a view, religion is deemed to be a private affair, something between individual beliefs and their god's, a relation that should not spill over into the public domain. Whereas religion is expected to limit itself exclusively to regulating human relations between the visible and invisible worlds, it is politics, on the other hand, which is deemed solely responsible for regulating their relations with the state that they live in. We should

practice "Live and let Live", by practicing love, compassion and mutual respect in daily life.

## Conclusion

Religion occupies a special place in the life of man, so also human rights has become an accepted way of living. Our problem has been balancing religious freedom with human rights principles. In this paper, we examined the idea of religion, we examined the rights discourse stating its evolution, we discussed religion and rights in the light of notable cases from two countries, we also examined the limits of religious freedom in several jurisdictions and suggested means of achieving religious harmony. It is our submission that Religion and Human Rights can co-exist if all and sundry will believe, accept and practice human rights principles and ideas alongside the tenets of their religion.

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