

A note on Inter Faith Harmony

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There is a close connection between the lack of harmony that we find among the adherents of different faiths and the discord in Economic affairs. To put it in another way, the ills such as income disparity, waste and conspicuous consumption are symptoms of man's cynical lack of Spiritual moorings, a failure of Religion. Yet the religious authorities are today alive to this fact. The archbishop of Canterbury, The Dalai Lama, the Heads of various Hindu organizations, The Pope stresses the role of Theology in improving conditions on Earth.

For a new Heaven on Earth, a strong Ecumenical movement, not only among the Christian groups but among all the religions of the world is necessary. The world has shrunk so much that being in the same boat that is listing and leaking, as it were, we have to pull together. Today Equivocation is not a pejorative. On the contrary, each one of us needs to be culturally and faith wise, possess multiple identities and affiliations. It can be done as demonstrated by David Frawley or Raimondo Panikkar, Sri Ramakrishna or Raja Rammohan Roy.

All the great men mentioned here had no difficulty in being accepted by different powerful religious traditions without being

formally tied down to any schism. There were many others of the same type such as Guru Nanak Dev. The Theo doctrine of any one faith was too narrow to hedge in these open minded and large hearted men. They were like Roberto de Nobile the missionary in South India who caused his superiors some concern because he advised them to learn from the Brahmins of Tanjore rather than teach them anything.

When Akbar in the sixteenth century tried to promote inter faith harmony, he was mocked for his naiveté by Hindus and Muslims. At the same time in England if one was not sure whether one was a Catholic or Church of England, one could be hanged by the state for the crime of EQUIVOCATION a word which thereby got a bad name. In any case, it was never easy for a person to be an advocate of inter faith harmony or to examine the similarities between Religions. In today's world, not only equity and justice not merely in economics but across the board has made interfaith harmony an absolute necessity.

The First Step is to Find The Essential Commonality Between Faiths.

The common factor in all religious zeal is the aspiration to bow ourselves to the will of

God. Man needs to connect with a Superhuman Power that propels, guides and protects us. One's life should have a super ordinate goal. Such goal is implicit in the ancient Indian ideals of ARTHA, KAMA, MOKSHA AND ABOVE ALL, DHARMA for a successful existence. Each of these has a spiritual component. Success in their pursuit requires ASPIRATION ON THE PART OF THE SEEKER. THIS ASPIRATION ITSELF IS THE COMMON FACTOR IN ALL RELIGIONS. Understanding this can serve as the firm basis of harmony among religions

Religious aspiration is a normal Human Propensity. So is the propensity to 'Truck and Barter' as Adam Smith would remind us. Religious doctrines are manmade and the work of the devil is hidden in the details where there is much Vanity in dogmas as we all know well. In spiritual aspiration all religions converge. An insatiable hunger to experience God is common to all saints', seers and seekers of all faiths. Those who want to promote inter faith

harmony should accept this, ignore the dogmas, and focus on the basic Human quality of all humanity.

The Second Step is to Give an Opportunity to People of all Faiths to Learn Together, Pray Together, Eat Together and Earn Together.

Promoters of inter faith harmony could organize themselves to start, equip and manage youth clubs, games programs, learning different skills, social service camps, Eco development projects and so on. An imaginative and innovative programme can do much to bind people together, which after all was the original purpose of religion. The word RELIGION comes from Rele-Gare that is to 'bind together'. As early as the Vedas in India, there was this well known dictum: EKAMSAD VIPRA BAHUDHA VADANTHI. That is to say TRUTH IS ONE BUT SAGES CALL IT BY DIFFERENT NAMES.



In the dawn of World Interfaith Harmony Week (3-9 February 2013), the Nishkam Centre became the setting for a diverse gathering of communities, voluntary and faith organisations, who came together to discuss ways in which interfaith activities can help solve the challenges of poverty.