

## Philosophical Approach for Cultural Harmony and Peace in the light of Advaitic notion of 'Oneness.'

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### Abstract:

Philosophy is all about the WHY questions. So, let me also begin with a why question here. Why in the first place we are considering and talking about Cultural Harmony and in turn about the Global Peace? The Sustainable Development Goals includes Peace as one of its goals and the Advaitic notion of "oneness" certainly helps in bringing peace to the society. This paper highlights the difference between tolerance and acceptance. It also explains many philosophical terms in depth and unfolds how Advaita helps in bringing Cultural Harmony.

**Keywords:** Advaita Vedant, Swami Vivekananda, Cultural Harmony, Peace, Notion of Oneness

Again in Philosophy when we get to see the term Karma we are reminded of the three different ways to realize the Truth within and after this Anubhuti (Intuitive Experience) there is only one possibility in the Universe i.e. of Harmony and peace. The three paths are Bhakti Yoga which introduces to us the virtue of Devotion, then comes the Karma Yoga which tells us what ought to be done and the last one is the Jnana Yoga which showers upon the wisdom which is already present in us. In this context Swami Vivekananda has said a beautiful phrase, "Knowledge is the manifestation of the strength within us." Here we cannot have a critical discussion in this respect decide which is best way to realize the strength within. All of them are equally important and suffice each other.

Also in the Western Philosophy we have two cardinal 'isms' in order to get the Knowledge. This comes under the domain of Epistemology where we deal with everything related to Knowledge (the knower, the known, the source and Knowledge.) These two are Rationalism and Empiricism. Rationalism states that Reason is the **only** source of Knowledge which is certain and valid, and on the other hand Empiricism states that Sense Experience is the **only** source of Knowledge. Here there is absolutely no loophole in stating so from the theoretical viewpoint, problems occur in the practicality of this. This word 'only' is problematic here. It makes the views radical and from there the issue arises of what is superior and what is inferior! Here, we see German Philosopher Immanuel Kant reconciling these two radical viewpoints in his Critical Philosophy. He states that both are necessary for Knowledge. Here we get to see how radical viewpoints lead to conflicts and how reconciling and the acceptance lead towards the Harmony.

Recently we have had a 'Tolerance' lobby in India. The detailed information of that particular incidence is not I am going to concentrate upon but about the term tolerance in itself. In Philosophy we have another branch named as Logic. There we have Aristotelian Logic or Traditional Logic. There we get to see a discussion regarding 'Terms' which are divided into two: Categorematic Terms and Syncategorematic Terms. These terms are said to have

Denotation and the Connotation. So when we utilize any term we should take into consideration both of these. And mentioning this here should certainly have some context here.

Let's elucidate this. We have seen two terms here, 'Acceptance' and 'Tolerance.' So, when we take a keen detailed note of these then we would understand that the term 'Tolerance' has negative connotations but the term 'Acceptance' has positive and all-encompassing connotations. Let us have a gigantic example in this respect. And it is none other than India- 'Bharat' or 'Hindustan.' India is known and widely celebrated as the most colorful nation across the Globe. We have all heard the phrase "Unity in Diversity." This phrase finds its embodiment in the most diverse nation called India. Here we find diversity in every aspect, may it be cultures, Languages, Folklores, Traditions, Rituals, Religions and so on.

If we contemplate we will notice that there is one common thread in all of these. They are not 'Apaurusheya' but very much 'Paurusheya.' In a much comprehensive manner let's call it man made. Now the question is if all of these are man-made then how we can form radical opinions regarding its superiority. It is simply like comparing the water to the oxygen as of what is more important to live! When we see the word 'Religion' here, we are instantly reminded of various religions viz. Sikhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity and so on.

But in Philosophy the term Dharma is very inclusive. It means Duty or Action (what ought to be done). It is also considered as the first Purushartha. When we translate it as Religion the inclusivity of Dharma cease to exist and we are simply left with distinctions and rigidity. When someone asks what's your Religion we have a quick answer for that. But I want to know many of those have read the Philosophy in the form their respective Scriptures without any prejudice or bias? And then let us assume they have then afterwards how many of them willingly studied other Religious Scriptures with a rational and liberal perspective? I presume may be a handful of people might have done that. Then again a question comes up, how to define any one to be the best out of all or which is more supreme? How can we say so? 'To err is human', we say then how can we say that A is superior and B is not? If we agree that error is the part and parcel of Human Nature then these religions and their respective scriptures which are manmade, how can we fight over which is superior or inferior? It would be contradictory to do so.

In Philosophy, when we study any Religion we have to study it under the domain of Comparative study of Religions. While doing so their certain Aims and Objectives to be taken care of. I shall enumerate a few: It should not be unrealistic and biased but factual and realistic. An attitude of 'Objective Knowledge seeking' has to be adopted. If academically studied then it should not be just a description but it should also be evaluative and critical. Criticisms should be made within the framework of its own beliefs, convictions, ideas and practices. Evaluations must be made with an open mind and the standards derived from one must not be imposed upon another. The writer of Comparative Religion should have a balanced mind, unbiased, unprejudiced, trained in scientific neutrality and yet sensitive.

The idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is implicit in the Universal Religion of Swami Vivekananda. It is very prominent in his address, he says, we believe not only in the universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. He further adds and quotes a hymn: "As the

different streams having their sources in different places mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.”

There is a small story he has mentioned while addressing. Why we disagree? In this regard he gives a beautiful story of a Frog. It had lived there for a long time since birth. It every day cleansed the water of all the worms and bacilli. This went on. One day another frog that lived in the sea came and fell into the well. And they had a conversation. And it leads to the point of what is bigger a well or a sea? The frog that had lived in the well was sure that well is bigger and the one who had lived in the sea considered the sea to be bigger. There lies all the difficulty. On these lines if we consider any social example then we can easily see that we are also acting like the frog lived in the well, fighting over who is great. Everyone is sitting in their own respective wells and fighting over the thing as which is bigger and supreme.

Further he has implicitly explained that the Excellence and purity has no religious affiliation or particularity. They have transcendent Universality. The Lord has declared to the Hindu in his incarnation as Krishna, “I am in every religion as the thread through a string of pearls. Wherever thou seek extraordinary holiness and extraordinary power raising and purifying humanity, know thou that I am there.”

In this manner, we got to see ample of examples of how Philosophical Approach can bring in the Cultural Harmony. The very moment Dvait or duality ceases to exist , Advaita begins and this brings in the idea on oneness and we accept everything which is ours. We cannot dislike what is ours and if we accept everything to be ours then there will be no conflict and Harmony will be established. Advaita Makarand has a verse which will summarise this idea of oneness and acceptance.

*Aham-asmi sadaa bhaami kadaachin-naa 'ham-apriyah.,  
Brahmaivaa 'ham-atah siddham saccidaananda-lakshanam*

*I ever exist and I always shine; never do I dislike myself. Therefore, it is established that Truth/ Brahman, of the nature of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, alone I Am.*

From this, it is very clear that if we consider the world to be ours and accept the differences and respect them then we would only be able to like them and not dislike them because this verse states that the only person we like in this world is the self. And we accept everything to be ours then there wouldn't be any conflict left. And then we can see the Cultural Harmony established and also the Goal number 16 of Sustainable Goal will be achieved, through Advait Darshan.

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