



RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND TOLERANCE IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT :

Generally there is a need of religious tolerance in democracy. The aim of the paper is to understand religious pluralism and tolerance in Indian context. Religious plurality is adjusted to conduct in the Hindu context. The two major views adopted are (a) assimilation and (b) the water-tight compartment response. Hinduism is a non-institutionalized religion it does not face the problem of defining itself. Among reformers thinkers two are briefly treated in the paper. Hindu philosophical life has been traditionally associated with disputation about matters of theory, whether or not systems or particular tenets were in line with the canonical literature. A system such as Advaita Vedanta has acquired the status of religion. Mahatma Gandhi was inclined to set store by the common ethical values which are related to diverse religious beliefs. But he was too realistic to rely on what is theoretical point. In It is true that in a corporate house, people from different religious faith work together as a unit to undertake a particular task which provide an opportunity to them to understand each other religion and faiths. Contrast with what we found in Mahatma Gandhi, Radhakrishnan's writings have a strictly philosophical perspective in favor of which he used to cite well-known passages from the Rig-Veda, Upanishads and Gita.

Religious pluralism with tolerance is a proven fact of life in India assimilating diversity of different religious traditions. And the framers of our Constitution established Secular State by treating all religions equally. It is true that in a corporate house, people from different religious faith work together as a unit to undertake a particular task which provide an opportunity to them to understand each other religion and faiths.

KEYWORDS : Indian context , theoretical point , canonical literature.

INTRODUCTION

Generally there is a need of religious tolerance in democracy. The aim of the paper is to understand religious pluralism and tolerance in Indian context. Now the question is considered as, **does Pluralism in religious judgements necessarily lead to relativism?** Religious plurality is adjusted to conduct in the Hindu context. The two major views adopted are (a) assimilation and (b) the water-tight compartment response. Hinduism is a non-institutionalized religion it does not face the problem of defining itself. Among reformers thinkers two are briefly treated in the paper, Mahatma Gandhi and Radhakrishnan. The first of these brings



together the concerns of the scholar and the reformer. His somewhat futuristic conception of a new age, in which each religion would be regarded as the truth ethnically expressed, brings him rather close to Sri Aurobindo.

Some Theoretical Considerations Concerning Pluralism

I begin with some theoretical considerations, largely to deal with the question: if pluralism and religious

judgement is considered legitimate, especially in cross-cultural contexts, how can relativism be avoided? There are two points here that could give us pause, the notion of "religious judgement" and the concept of "pernicious relativism". There is the question of "religious judgement" elsewhere. So to the idea of Relativism is a position which has been held especially with reference either to what is "right" or to what is "true", the former giving rise to ethical relativism and the latter to cognitive relativism. The phrase "religious relativism" has been somewhat neutral between these two, some users being worried about the diversity of ethical precepts in different religions (something always underplayed by "universalists") and others getting over diversity of truth claims. At first sight the former has a more pragmatic air about it than the latter in the sense that what is enjoined or forbidden has *prima facie* a more immediate bearing on what we do than "beliefs" purporting to reflect "the truth".

Religious Pluralism and Hinduism

It is usually the case in the collective sphere where collectivities coexist in a factual sense and not with the evaluative connotation often used in India that the presence of "others" serves to promote a sharpening of self-definition, an "in-gathering", a focusing of identity. Indian cultural tradition that "it has at no time *defined itself* in relation to the other, nor acknowledged the other in its inassimilable otherness.

Hindu philosophical life has been traditionally associated with disputation about matters of theory; whether or not systems or particular tenets were in line with the canonical literature. A system such as *Advaita Vedanta* has acquired the status of religion. It is also interesting to note that within the philosophical systems the issue of God's existence or non-existence never had pride of place. The majority of the systems are not theistic. And yet atheism was by no means thought to be 'incompatible with a religious outlook.

Hinduism includes the *istadevata* (favourite god) idea. Henotheism takes in India, the validity of all allegiances being taken to be perfectly compatible with individual allegiance to a particular deity. The latter is regarded as a manifestation of a moral general principle; in contrast to the commitment models in the Semitic group of religions. It is the phenomenon of multiple allegiances. This is based on the idea that various sources of enlightenment and consolation are open. For example, one may combine attendance at discourses on the *Gita* in the local park with participation in Durga Puja and visits to Sri Aurobindo's ashram at Pondicherry.

Hinduism as a non-institutionalized religion is free of dogma. The non orthodox, i.e. those who do not accept the authority of the Vedas, are in a different category. Their views are not anathema. In different periods of the Indian history of ideas is a sequence of philosophical concepts which are often vaguely formulated and more commonly just invoked, and which in sediment fashion have become part of the ethos of the country. One of the earliest of these is the concept of *unity* which was probably born out of a cosmic consciousness which was part and parcel of an agricultural way of life. Its most abstract formulation is the *Brahman-Atman* equation of the Upanishads (expressed in the aphorism *tat tvam asi*). This should presumably extend to all wherever they may be. Although one might imagine that a highly humanistic philosophy would evolve from a worldview of the unity of all souls deriving from a metaphysics of identity, according to Swami Vivekananda this implication was drawn out. Lofty though the Upanishadic metaphysics may be, no dialogic possibility can be read off from it, but only the conception of realization of the unity of mankind at a level which we are not commonly aware of in everyday life. Swami Vivekananda saw its potential as a consciousness-raising.

As far as religion is concerned, there is another part of Hindu tradition which positively discourages debate/argument and this is the communication of teaching by the guru to the pupil, in a form specific to the needs of the pupil, with various pupils being instructed in separate ways. One might throw in an oblique reflection here. A great part of Hindu prescription in the Dharmasastras concerns, basically, the avoidance of conflict. *Lokasangraha* could almost be said to be defined by a kind of prosperity which was free of conflict and did not invite it. A prosperous society of this type would have to be strictly ordered and virtually closed to threatening tantalizing influences from outside. Intellectual venturing therefore had to be within well-

understood bounds. The concept of *svadharma* in this context exerts a tempering or limiting influence (depending on how one views it) on the scope of verbal interchange.

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Mahatma Gandhiji Views on Tolerance and Pluralism:

Mahatma Gandhi was inclined to set store by the common ethical values which are related to diverse religious beliefs. But he was too realistic to rely on what is theoretical point. Since centuries a host of ethical precepts has not prevented violence from dogging the entire history of humankind. Gandhi therefore cast about for new experiments in living, consciously bringing together people of different communities in these experiments. The common observance of festivals, avoidance of food that gave offence to others, attempting to *value* what others valued, instituting a common prayer meeting for all these were some of the ways in which Mahatma Gandhi responded to a religiously plural situation.

Gandhi was too much of a realist to set much store by either an original Alpha ground or an Omega point of ultimate convergence. Common imperfections, he believed were balanced by common positive powers for good. His own methods of cultivating the latter were the self-purification of the individual and the practical experience of constructive work. Rapport with those of other faiths, he thought, could not be attained by "dialogue" per se, nor in any case could it be made a specific object of search. In this, I believe, his instinct was on the right lines. It is in the context of work that we are in contact with "others" whether these be of other faiths or of our own.

Dr. S Radhakrishnan's Views

In 1939 he wrote "Real religion can exist without a definite conception of the deity, but not without a distinction between the spiritual and the profane, Religion is not so much a revelation to be attained by us in faith as an effort to unveil the deepest layers of man's being and get into enduring contact with them.

In contrast with what we found in Mahatma Gandhi, Radhakrishnan's writings have a strictly philosophical perspective in favor of which he used to cite well-known passages from the Rigveda, Upanishads and Gita. The above quotation throws interesting light on some of the issues. Radhakrishnan's distinction between spiritual and profane is linked with Adi Shankaracharya's distinction between the *vyavaharika* and the *paramiirthika*. The various expressions of truth to be found in diverse religious traditions are at the former level. The goal, however, is not the path but what lies beyond the path.

Addressing a Japanese audience decades later he said:

All the religions of mankind under the
stress of modern thought are moving
forward to a realization of the spirit of
religion, reaching forth to the
Fundamental and lasting verities of
truth and love.

In his public pronouncements his focus was, not unnaturally, on peace. At times he was confident that religion was gradually being purged of "superstition, ritualism and obscurantism" and at others he said that this is what ought to be the case. While public pronouncements may serve to give a positive and optimistic orientation to thinking and project a healthy image abroad, the philosophical issues must be given due attention.

The validity of religion, for Radhakrishnan, seems to have an instrumental value, its instrumentality in achieving "realization", a word commonly used by Vedantins when they express themselves in English. Now, if the various traditions cloud the truth in the very process of diversifying, it follows that the aspirant for such realization will find in religion as ordinarily understood not so much a path as something to be transcended. And if the path is to be eventually left behind we can scarcely find herein the motive for exploring, however sympathetically, the path of another. The target is the "realization" of spirit and not the rapport between one human being and another. It is perhaps difficult for any form of idealistic monism to grant adequate status to plurality.

But there are other impressions in Radhakrishnan's thought. It was noted earlier that Mahatma Gandhi attached importance to the idea of reforming the tradition, putting one's house in order. Radhakrishnan also spoke in these terms. He wrote:

We can so transform the religion to
which we belong as to make it
approximate to the religion of the
spirit. I am persuaded that every
religion has possibilities of such
transformation.

CONCLUSION:

Religious pluralism with tolerance is a proven fact of life in India assimilating diversity of different religious traditions. And the framers of our Constitution established Secular State by treating all religions equally. There is freedom of religion to every person subject to public order, morality and health and as per the Constitution. Shows that corporations encouraging religious pluralism have flourished and emerged as leaders in the world. It is true that in a corporate house, people from different religious faith work together as a unit to undertake a particular task which provide an opportunity to them to understand each other religion and faiths. It will help the nation to achieve its resolve to establish a religious pluralistic society and if the corporations encourage religious pluralism, tolerance and fraternity, they will not only be discharging their Constitutional obligations.

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