

The universal religion - a possibility

There are many religions rooted into human society strongly. If we analyse correctly and impartially we will come to a conclusionñ all the religions are univoice in some points, nevertheless they cannot be out of difference in other points. All the saints, religious preachers try their best to proveñ the target is one, but the ways differ. So, we should not fight each other owing to religious fundamentalistic attitude.

The saints, hermits and godmen give emphasis on the resembling theories among religious faiths in order to calm the sectarian hotness, but fundamentalists do their utmost to enkindle the sectarian kindling in the evil purpose of proving difference and establish own sect as topmost among all.

The intellectuals, critics and thinkers in this case act dually. By analysis and synthesis they come to the conclusionñ both similarity and dissimilarity do play equally in the field of religion.

The world is full of varieties in all cases. The plurality in language, culture, society, politics, economics and customary traditions lead to observe religious duties in their own way of nativity which causes the difference in religious theories. But for only this type of difference we should not fight against each other.

On synthesising all religious faiths a conclusion is drawnññ religion is nothing but a way to satisfy the thirst for liberation from worldly sorrowfulness and sufferings. If this is the only aim the

religion is quite a personal affair which cannot be interfered otherwise, and none can be compelled to fight collectively against another faith. But in practice this has been done from ages together. Even the religion plays vital role causing wars. In comparison to its beneficial points, its malefic results are not less than. On opening books of history and present newspapers one can witness much bloodsheds, war, communal riots of national and international importance due to religious fundamentison. There is no end to these life-killing process of events.

The religion is to bind in a thread, but it has done as a dividing agent ! Swami Vivekananda says likely. Nothing has made more for peace and love than religion; nothing has engendered fiercer hatred than religion. "Nothing has made the brotherhood of man more tangible than religion; nothing has bred more bitter enmity between man and man than religion. Nothing has built more charitable institutions, more hospitals for men, and even for animals, than religions; nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion."¹

In spite of this the religious preachers argue religion is only one way for universal brotherhood, peace, unity and friendship, if a religion of universal approach in both theory and practice evolves.

If this possibility becomes materialised by any means then what will be the structure and characteristics of that universal religion ?

This can be formulated in three waysñ

- The People of world has to accept one among existing religions as their religion and practise accordingly. As a result that

(1) The complete works swami Vivekananda, vol : ii, p. 360

particular religion will not only be practised of a group but also by whole mankind.

- By collecting common factors from all the religions a common religious platform will be made for the whole world. All should obey, observe and practise the made-religion without any hesitation.

- A new theory of religion will evolve with a universal approach, easily acceptable theories and all such characteristics which can be well-acceptable to the mankind without any hesitation.

(A) **First alternative** : The possibility of universalisation of an existing religion.

If one faith will be accepted by all as universal religion, all have to obey and respect the belief, practice, parables, divine characters, founder, theory and philosophy etc. of that religion. For this a little bit abhoration will bring fraction and breakage in religion. Before going to conclusion at first we should testify the existing religions each by each.

The main religious faiths are Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam etc., but in actual practice Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam or Muhammadianismñ these four faiths are accepted and practised by crores of people in the world.

Jainism prevails but limits its practice among some families. So, its universal acceptability cannot be established now.

Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest religion and it has now very few followers, for which many do not accept even its claim of a living religion. Therefore, its universalization does not occur.

Judaism is the old form and its renovated form has been evolved as Christianity, so, it is foolishness to accept Judaism for universalisation.

Hinduism : If Hinduism becomes universal religion ñall of world have to believe in immortality of soul, theory of binding of deeds and rebirth, Moksha; salvation from circle of births, prayers, ceremonial activities, vedic traditions of doing *samskars* or sacraments and others. They are compelled to obey and worship Lord SriRam, Srikrishna and thirty-six crores of deities. Without asking the causes one has to observe all the rituals.

The holy scriptures like Ved, Bhagavat Gita, Ramayan, Bhagavat Puranas and Mohabharat must be worshipped, respected and obeyed their sayings by all also.

The God himself incarnates on earth to establish Dharma, the religion and annihilate evil forces. The ten incarnates have come yet be worshipped and honoured by all.

Buddhism : On accepting Buddhism as universal religion all have to maintain silence regarding the existence of God. The world is full of only sorrows must be acknowledged. The past life-stories of Lord Buddha according to Jatak stories must be believed. The other theories like momentarism, eightfold ways of practice, must be accepted and practised. To get nirvana; the salvation one has to abandon his family life and relations and be boudha vikshu- Buddhist type of hermit.

In such a modern age of passion and matterialistic approach some main principles of Buddhism cannot be accepted wholeheartedly.

Christianity : Christianity being practised by Europeans, mostly English people spreaded all over world with their conquest of countries one after one and so also its priests (father), preachers go across the world to converse the needy people into Christian faith by providing money, necessary commodities etc. As all over the world Christianity prevails a little or more its preachers claim its universal character. For example, George Galloway in his book *Philosophy of Religion* opinesñ only that

religion may be taken as universal which touches the inner soul of man and goes beyond all distinctions of class or group such that ways of deliverance pointed out by it are applicable to all, and not to only a few of a particular class or group.²

In his opinion also three religions of the world— Buddhism, Christianity and Islam— satisfy these conditions, but it is only Christianity which satisfies them in the most suitable and efficient manner.

Every religion tries its best to touch the inner soul of man, its rules and practices are never meant for a definite land or group of people but the whole mankind. No religion originally is sectarian in nature. So, Galloway's view is one-sided and biased.

Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity could not give complete philosophy of religion because of his untimely death by crucifixion and thus, Christianity being an incomplete philosophy cannot satisfy all the requirements of people. That is why, it is unwise to argue and see Christianity as the universal religion.

Islam : Islam as universal religion cannot satisfy all the requirements. At first a question will arise regarding the end of tradition of prophets after Muhammad. Allah or God has marked full stop after his coming. It is unscientific and unreal theory which tries to end the evolutionary process. Again religious prejudice is more common among Islamists, because they declare war (Jihad) against other religions times and again, this type of system does not prevail in any other religion. One has to accept all these and arabian culture etc. in order to practise the Islamic religion. Will people of world accept all these factors ? It cannot be.

(2) Philosophy of religion, p. 138

India : the common platform of all the religions.

Dr. Radhakrishnan, the great scholar of Indological studies advocates an idea of accepting Hinduism as universal religion. In his book named "Eastern Religions and Western Thought", he argues that Hinduism is relatively more broad-minded, liberal, tollerant towards all other faiths than others. It has been proved ages together in India. This small world consists of multi-religious faiths, paths, beliefs, cultures, languages and races. No other country than India has so a chance of being a field of multitude. Hinduism believes all the religions are various ways of one destination, so, there is no actually difference among them.

Due to the liberal mentality and broad-mindedness many religious preachers have come to India time to time to spread their idealism, none did protest them, but some accepted them adherently. Hindu people, so have accepted Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam etc. Moreover the foreign religious preachers also with very much pleased with India and Hindu people dwelt here permanently. They have confessed laterñ their idealism more or less has been indebted to Hinduism as latter is primitive and complete religion in the world. If one analyses in a impartial way he shall see all the faiths are not different in their theory to Hinduism. Other religions have lost their special identifications by the time. The liberarity of Hinduism has absorbed those foreign faiths within. For an example, Buddhism born in India, but did not keep it originality as Buddhadev accepted as an Incarnate of Lord Visnu in ten-fold avtars ñ a theory of Hinduism and its main fraction ñMahajan-panthi worshipped Lord Buddha in Hindu way of practice.

The theory of RadhaKrishnan cannot be welcome without any remonstrance. The liberality, broad-mindedness, tolerance etc. only cannot satisfy mankind of world. They have to acknowledge the customs, faiths, tales of Hinduism, but it is not possible, again

ages together this has not happened. Hindu people are liberal, broad-minded and tolerant, but it does not mean they do not protest against other faiths. History is there to stand in the witness box. Islam and Christianity were spreaded in India because of invaders and rulers of both faiths. Hindu people were mostly forced to accept Islam and Christianity, but not out of their liberal character.

Hinduism has influenced others a lot, and it was also influenced by others to some extent. If both faith dwell closely ages together there is every possibility of being influenced mutually, there is no newness to it.

Hinduism is more capable of being universal, but it is too primitive to be accepted in modern age as many parts of it require reformations. Although some claim they reformed Hinduism a lot, but actually in line of reformation Hinduism has not gone so remarkably. Once more the philosophy of Hinduism is higher but it is in theory only, in practice it is as primitive as of past.

The first possibility is proved no more successful; henceforth the second possibility should be taken for discussion.

(B) The Second alternative : Forming a religion on the basis of common factors of all religions taken together.

The second possibility seems to be more viable alternative. All the religions have some common and essential points. If these essential and common factors are taken together and a common platform is created for these the problem of difference will be solved. People of world will not hesitate to accept it because of its impartial and unbiased nature. The three main factor of religion : tales, beliefs and religious practices should be analysed followingly.

(a) Tales, parables or religious stories

Each religion has some tales which can be cited to prove

the glory of religion, Lord, angels, deities, principles and religious practices. If we see impartially and intently these are same in nature and purpose, but different in characters, social values, application. Regards for parent, Lords, scriptures, and observance of charity, mercy, service, love, inter-interestedness, fellow feelingness etc. are well accepted in all religions. The tales, parables are nothing but event serially furnished with imaginary characters intended to educate the mass to possess all these good qualities. It is an intellectual way of thought, but actually the mass is far away from the intellectuality rather that believes all the tales true and so also the characters. For example, Christ was crucified, but Krisna was an unparallel hero of the age, none could think of defeating him. Although Christ and Krisna both are true character of Christianity and Hinduism respectively the followers of both faith will compare between two. Hindu demands Krisna is powerful and Christ is weak as, he could not even protect himself from being crucified, if he had miracle power why could he not do so? It means he had no such divine power as Krisna had. One cannot wash out this type of thinking from the brain of Hindu mass.

This type of unhealthy comparison may be applied to all other religions.

(b) Belief

On the basis of belief there is dissimilarity among religions. God is one, two, many some believes. Buddhism marks question on very existence of God. How is it possible to draw a common conclusion regarding the existence of God? In one religion theory of action, rebirth gets more emphasis, in another the practice of moral conducts do so. In somewhere a fearness to God as punish-giver is established, in another where God is a loving father who loves his children mercifully. The destination of human beings to achieve salvation is motto of some, but other advocate to achieve a place in heaven is most purposeful.

Therefore, a common point cannot be established taking the beliefs together.

(c) Principles, conducts and practices

Each religion has some principles, moral conducts and customary practices. In intellectual thinking customary practices miss their values, but in mass thinking these are more valuable than others.

To find out similarity among the customs and practices is not possible by any means. For observance of customary rites and practices, a common idea cannot be established. An artificial common character of customary practice can be imagined but in practices it is not viable. Because social law, tradition, regional necessity influence all these practices a lot. If a common customary duty made artificially is thrown to the mankind, they will throw it out complaining it doesn't touch their heart and not necessary at all for them as it is not befitting to their regional society.

On accepting the second alternative the following points should be taken for study and consideration.

- Which are common factors ? How can these be decided ?
- Who will decide this ? Is the deciding agent is one man or a committee ?
- Who will select the deciding agency ?
- Again has the deciding agency any divine power of godly quality to judge ñ a question may arise, because in order to establish a religious faith the founder must have some or full divine power blended with Godly attributes.
- The religion is a affair of eternity, divinity, belief, surrender, call of inner heart and that can not be established democratically or voting process and the deciding agency cannot force or influence the whole mankind to accept and

practise the newly made religion on the basis of collecting common points taking together.

Mughal Emperor Akabar had tried his best to make a religion of this type *ñDin-i-lahi* but it did not get support and momentum even from his close people, courtiers and was vanished away during some times.

This alternative possibility is beautiful to hear, imagine and discuss, but in real sense it is valueless. If a time comes, when this alternative possibility is materialised that will be good indication for the human beings. But actually it can never be possible.

(C) Third alternative :

A new path will take birth and with its liberal characteristics, conducts, institutions it will be acceptable to all the universe, henceforth a universal religion will evolve.

A hope has been emerged out from time immemorial to have a universal religion up-to-date, but in practice it has been yet a dream only.

When a new path takes birth its propounder wishes his religious path will be universal one, but not of a selected few. For that he and his followers try with utmost endeavour to make it universal but in fact all of these types prevail being a religion of few, a country, some lands or a specific region only.

The religions set up so far e.g. Buddhism, Christianity, Islam etc. were blossomed to be sniffed by all but due to some reasons or not this did not happen. All were destined to be limited according to place, time and person. The so-called universality has become a dreamy factor forever.

Each religion has more universal approach with less regional characteristics, but afterwards the followers make it more regional and less universal for their selfish, self-centric and

fundamentalistic approach.

We should not be pessimistic. May a religion evolve with complete universal approach and even its structure, get-up and spirit within are so strongest, highest and best which cannot be broken up, divided and misinterpreted otherwise by afterward followers for their own selfish and fundamentalistic attitude !

Some intellectuals opine a thought for universal religion is vague, because people of world with so much difference in most spheres of life cannot be compelled to come under an umbrella of a religion. If it does happen all will be artificial approach, not a natural one and anything artificial cannot live long, but the believers are in hope of such a possibility. If such a possibility is materialised what will be the nature and structure of that new religion ? Who will materialise it ? When it will be possible ?

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