

The Possibility of Universal Religion

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Abstract: *Though Jainism is an aesthetic religion believing no creator in the world. Jainism believes that the present state of mind is the state of bondage which is due to only our past karma. We can, therefore, conclude that all religions of the world carried their view in their own way.*

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1. Introduction

Categorically speaking of the possibility of universal religion it can be said 'No'. Religion in one sense is a means of satisfying hunger of the soul for attaining a status which is free from the strifes and strains of the mundane resistance and there is no reason for quarrel if people of different traditions make efforts for satisfying the hunger in their different ways. The etymology of the word indicates that religion is there to bind men together in one thread of brotherhood, but the actual experience has been something different. It is more divided than bound.

Swami Vivekanand has rightly said, "Nothing has made the brotherhood of man more tangible than religion, nothing has made man were; nothing has made more better enmity between man and man than religion nothing has built more charitable institutions, more hospitals for man and even for animals than religion; nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion. It is felt that once there is a universal religion all bloodshed and enmity in the name of religion, all bloodshed and enmity in the name of religion will be completely over and religion will then have its real role to play the role of binding all people together in the role of universal brotherhood. IN one sense such a situation will be highly beneficial for mankind and therefore may be highly desirable. But the question is whether such a situation is really possible, i.e. whether such a situation is really possible. That is such a religion is logically possible is undoubted because there is no contradiction involved in the concept of universal religion. But the question is of its practical possibility. So, we have really to discuss the question whether universal religion is practically possible.

But before seeing whether universal religion, is practically possibility of a universal religion will mean, or in other words, what the possible universal religion will possible be like. It may be any one of the three following possibilities.

- One of the prevailing religions themselves may be taken universally by all the people of the world to be their religion instead of one which they have so far been following as their own.
- Or else, common and essential points of all prevailing religions may be drawn out so as to form common set

of beliefs and practices to be one served and followed by all religious people of the world.

- Or again a totally fresh religion in a fresh manner may be enclosed and people all over the world accept it as their common religion but before seen whether universal religion in any of its forms is possible it will perhaps be worthwhile to see what actually the acceptance of religion by the people means. The consideration will as a matter of fact bring us very near to the consideration of the problem regarding the very nature of religion.

The question 'What is Religion' may be answered differently and the theoretical discussion on the problem as to what a man has to do or becomes when he accepts a particular religion may centre around various points. By seeing the entire thing on a very general and realistic plane one may very easily find that what a man is a matter of fact that has with him in having a particular religion like Hindu or Christian or any other kind of his an religion is that he entertains certain specific beliefs with regard to the world and life as a whole Hinduism represents on way of life on some specific kind of conviction or conviction with regard to the world - and - life as a whole, Buddhism another and Christianity yet another. The beliefs includes belief in God, belief in a specific nature of life after death, and the practices including ways of prayer, various ceremonies and residuals and many ethical virtues and duties.

Prayer in Religion

Almost all the religion of the world whether it is agnostic or general have different ideas to represent we know very well that all the religious have their own method of payer. All the postures adopted in praying especially the Hindus, Christians, Muslims are almost common. The Christians set before the altar and raise their hands before Gesus Christ, the Muslims enchant their prayer by sitting and bending their hands on a clean mat on the ground and the Mullah raises his voice 'Allah 'O' Akbar' from the top of the Muszid. The Hindus also raises their voice from their piyaghar by bending and showing their hands, before Gods/Goddess and doing arati before the bells ring. The Tibetians all the time non - stop ring on their temple in honour of Buddha which ever religion ever does.

In this connection let me add that the great rishi kabir was has said –

पत्थरपूजेहरिमिलेतोमैपूजोपहाड़यातोसेभलीभांतिजोपीसखायेसंसारठीकइसीतरह

Poet Rahim has given a seething attack saying –

कांकरपाथरजोड़केमस्जिदलेइचुनाताचढ़ीमुल्लाबांगदेकिआबहराहुआखुजाये

It is Braithwaite who while analyzing the nature of religious language has drawn our attention very significantly towards their aspect of the religions of the world. According to his analysis every religion consists of two things. (1) moral way of life (2) certain stories. The first is primary and the second is only subsidiary, but the two are very religion. . Thus every religion, as its people observe and follow it consists mainly of three things – (1) certain beliefs (2) certain practices and (3) certain religious stories. Naturally, therefore, accepting one set of beliefs and practices and entertaining one set of beliefs and practices and entertaining one set of religious stories in mind rather than another by him. Now let us see in this light the question of the acceptability of the so - called universal religion in any of the above forms means its acceptability by all people live by all people at like.

The practical possibility of the universal religions in its first means the acceptability of the beliefs, practices and religious people of the world. For example if Hinduism becomes universal religion it will empty that all religious people of the world begin to believe alike in the immortality of the soul, Karma, rebirth, bondage and liberation and all of them adopt the Hindu way of prayer and worship, perform Hindu rituals and observe Hindu moral principles, Not only these, all the people of the world will begin to read, listen and remember with reference the Hindu sacred stories relating to Rama, Krishna, and many other Hindu mythical personalities. But when will it be possible ? Perhaps only then when Hindu beliefs, practices and religious prove to be the most satisfying, i. e. when they prove be such satisfy the religious instinct and hunger of the people of the world in the most efficient manner. As a matter of fact any religion which claims to be universal for which is taken as being the most suitable for this purpose will have to satisfy the conditions viz its beliefs, practices and religious stories are most acceptable to all the people of the world and are the most satisfying in the nature. But on what grounds can one have the best claim to be the best claim to the universal religion ? Each religion in its belief practices are most naturally, agreeably and conveniently acceptable to them. What will be the grounds on which one can claim supremacy for the beliefs and practices of any of the religion?

George Galloway in his book Philosophy of Religion express in view that Christianity contains within it all such elements in most efficient manner which may make a religion universal. According to him only that religion may be taken as universal which touches the inner soul of man which goes beyond all distinctions of class or group such that the ways of deliverance pointed out by it are applicable to all and not to only a few of a particular class or group.

In Galloway open three religions of the world – Buddhism, Christianity and Islam – satisfy these conditions, but it is only Christianity which satisfy them in the most suitable and efficient manner. But we can see it every well that Galloways opinion is only one sided and is based on an unwarranted bias for his own religion.

With an implicit bias for Hinduism Dr. Radhakrishnan sometimes seems to conceive the possibility of universal religion in the nature and form of Hinduism. In his book Eastern Religions and Western thought, he argues that

Hinduism by its very nature has been always very liberal and brood hearted has always been one of tolerance. It has always been believed that all religions refer to the same reality and they all are just like the different pathways leading to the same goal. History also presents testimony to this universalistic outlook of Hinduism. At times, people of different religions came to India and settled here. The Hindus quite happily allowed those people to settle and observe their own religions. But in course of time, these religions could hardly maintain their identity in face of the liberal and universalistic merged in it. Buddhism originated in India, spread and survived throughout the universe but it could hardly maintain its separate identity in India. The liberality of Hinduism absorbed it.

Those religions which did not merge into Hinduism were greatly influenced by it and they have hardly been able to maintain their original rigour. All these facts amply show that Hinduism contains within it qualities of being a universal religion. It can very well accommodate other religions within it and form ground for a universalistic faith. But on examination we can see that the grounds on which Radhakrishnan hopes and believes. Hinduism to contain within it the practical possibility of a universal religion are not very strong. The belief that Gods and goddesses of different religions are basically one and the same and that all the different religions are just the different pathways leading to the same goal do not constitute Hindu religion, they rather constitute Hindu philosophy of religion. Therefore, the practical philosophy of universal religion in the nature and form of Hinduism does not depend upon the fact that it looks to other religions with a sense of sympathy and tolerance rather it depends upon the answer to the question, how for the beliefs, practices and religious stories of Hinduism contains elements within them which will be efficaciously able to specify the head and the heart of all the religious people of the world. And it can definitely be not said with certainty that Hinduism possesses the elements which will satisfy all the people of the world. As we have seen above, all the religions of the world contain elements which best satisfy their followers in their own ways. The historical examples also prove nothing. The merger of certain religions may be a sequel to many factors of the time. There was a time when religion merged on to Hinduism and today there are several Hindus who are daily undergoing conversion into Christianity. Further, if Hinduism has influenced other religions the influence of other religions upon Hinduism cannot also be denied. It is quite natural that religions flourishing together influence each other and therefore there is nothing special in Hinduism influencing other religion. Thus the prevails one existing religion over all others such that is acceptable to all religious people of the world a like as their own religion does not seem practicable. The basic question is: which particular religion is competent for the purpose and why ? We have seen that all religious may have equal claims and the preference cannot amicably be decided. However, the basic question in this regard seems to be whether it is practically possible that same set of beliefs, practices and religious stories may be able to satisfy with equal efficiency the religious fooling of persons coming of different traditions and living at different places in different times and different situations. The answer seems to be most palpably negative. And therefore the practical

possibility of universal religion in the first form seems very much doubtful.

Let us now take up the second possibility which perhaps seems to be the most viable alternative. If the common and essential points of the religion are drawn out and put together so as to form a common set of beliefs and practices, perhaps that will be acceptable to all the religious people of the world ungrudgingly. But on analysis and examination, the matter does not seem to be easily practicable. There are, of course, similarities, amongst religions on many points and that we have already seen. But how far we can be able to form a religion in the full sense of the term on the basis of these similarities is still a matter of consideration. We have seen that accepting a religion by a man commonly accepting a certain set of beliefs, practices and religious stories as complicating that religion. Now, the point to be considered is, whether there are any similarities between the mythical stories of different religions, and that the common features may be taken out to form the religious stories related to Moses, Jehova on the one hand and Ram and Krishna on the other ? Similarly, is there any similarities between stories about Jesus Christ and others of the Christian tradition and the various religious stories present in Islam, Buddhism ? Similarly, on the level of beliefs, we find that some religions strictly believe in one God, some in two, and some do not believe in any God or Gods at all. Again some take God as personal, some as impersonal and some as super - personal. Again, in one religion belief in Karma and rebirth constitutes the central core in another religion is finds no place at all. Further again some take Moksha or Nirvana the ultimate destiny of man, others take the attainment of heaven as the ultimate destiny. What are the common points in all these which can be extracted from the belief of the universal religion?

This it is difficult to find common religious practices which may be extracted out of various religions so as to form the rites and rituals of the universal religion. And most of all, is religion something so external that certain beliefs, practices and religious chalked out, formulated and constructed in an artificial manner by taking points from different religion will give real satisfaction to followers ? Religion is primarily a matter of inner conviction, and nothing can be pressed upon a religions man artificially from without. The way in which the proposed set of common beliefs and practices is to be determined for the universal religion will definitely make it external and artificial which will hardly be able to satisfy the inner heart of the religious man. Such beliefs and practices will be like artificial instructions imposed from outside. They will therefore never have that inner anchorage in the heart of religious man which the original beliefs and practices of his own religion find in him. Such a religion therefore in short,, will not be religion, it may be anything else.

The third alternative of the practical possibility of universal religion is no less dubious. If universal comes about as a new religion in any form what so ever, it is bound to be nothing other than one more religion besides many existing from before hand. The same will be the fate of the so - called universal religion if it comes up in the form of a totally new

religion. The more name universal will hardly be able to make it universal.

Thus the practical possibility of universal religion in any of its possible forms seems bleak. As a matter of fact, such religion is not at all needed. What is needed is tolerance and sympathy on the part of the followers of every religion towards religion other their own. To our mind, if there is ever a religion a universal in any of the three above forms that will mark the end of true religion. Religion will then be only a fashion, an external clothing. It will be completely cut off from its root. Religion is a matter of inner conviction and the outer way of life just a consequence of that. Men so longer as they are men and not mere automata, have the right to differ from one another in their convictions are bound to have different ways of life in the light of their convictions. That is the real privilege of man. If an universal is thrust upon him from outside in the artificial form, this privilege is withdrawn and there is neither real nor real religion. Religion as we have said above is from one point of view a medium of satisfying the hunger of ones soul which arises due to deficiencies of mundane life. And if there are various ways of satisfying their hunger, where is the ground for quarrel. Every man has the right to differ from others on various points relating to life and existence. Why then debar from this privilege in the sphere of religion ? He has the right to differ and there is no need of evolving any universal religion. We will have only to learn and accommodate and respect differences in matters of religion. Difference are quite natural and they will have to be recognized and tolerated as such one cannot be both tolerant and religions at the same time. One cannot be both in tolerant and religions at the same time. The primary lesson of religion must be to tolerate and accommodate the ideas and sentiments of others. If someone finds unable to do it, he has no right to claim himself religious.

2. Concluding Remarks

Though basically speaking, all the religions of the world believes in soul rebirth and Karma except Charnakya. According to Charnaka the end of life is death. There remains nothing except death. Its famous catel - word is known as *ऋणकृत्वाधृतपिपेज*. A Live and let others live is the motto. Though Jainism is an atheistic religion believing no creator behind the world. The world, according to it is eternally existing and works by its own laws. Jainism believes that the present state of man is the state of bondage which is due to our own past Karma. As Jainism does not believe God, it has got no creation myth. The Jaina view of life and diotter is the immortal soul and it is same into the human life.

To sum up it can be said that despite what has been said we can conclude that all the religions of the world almost carried the view in their own way.

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