The Concept And Role Of Tolerance In Indian

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Introduction

Indian culture, being a continuing process, cannot be reduced, without remainder, to any particular stage in its long history, though for the purpose of intensive study or analysis we may well limit ourselves to a particular period or aspect. For the purpose of this Seminar we may confine ourselves to the ancient and medieval periods of Indian culture.

In the medieval period Indian culture cannot be reduced to its territorial stem, whether pre-Aryan or Aryan minus the cultural career of Islam in India. Indeed, the cultural history of the Muslims of the sub-continent is an integral part of Indian culture. By the same logic pre-Islamic Indian culture is as much the heritage of the Muslims of India as of the Hindus or others. Ideally speaking, neither the cultural elements of Indian origin predating the Muslim presence, nor the cultural elements of Islamic origin, developing and flourishing in the Indian environment, can be viewed as alien or dispensable elements of the highly complex and still growing entity or process called "Indian culture".

The analysis of the concept of tolerance is a philosophical task, but the description of the role of tolerance in Indian culture is a complex analytical-cum-historical task. If the skills of the philosopher be satisfactory, but the data supplied by the historian be incorrect or distorted, the philosopher's conclusions would go wrong. Again, the purely historical question itself comprises two distinct questions which should not be confused with each other: (a) what ideals, teachings or sentiments concerning tolerance exist in the culture, *i.e.* are found in the works of its philosophers, saints, poets, scriptures and folk-lore? And (b) what has been, the actual behavior of individuals or groups in that society, *i.e.* how far have the ideals been put into effect? Even highly educated persons frequently confuse the two questions with disastrous results.

THE MEANING OF *"TOLERANCE"*

Let us first analyze the word *"tolerance",* as the sponsors of the Seminar have used it, and let us call it the Seminar's use or meaning of the word. This sense is best conveyed by a quotation from a Standard English dictionary:

"... the disposition to tolerate or allow the existence of beliefs, practices or habits differing from one's own; now often freedom from bigotry, sympathetic understanding of others' beliefs, etcetera, without acceptance of them..."

The above sense of the word which is now the main or usual sense became prominent perhaps only in the 17/18th centuries when Western Europe first saw the dawn of the age of tolerance.[1] The original uses of the word referred to tolerance of metals, gold or silver

coins, of bridges to bear stress, or the capacity of a person to bear pain and suffering, *i.e.* the quality of endurance or the ability to bear irritants or pressures, etc. These uses have all become the specialized meanings of the word. The Seminar's use of *"tolerance"* has now pushed aside other uses into the conceptual background, as it were.[2]

The diverse meanings or uses of the word in different contexts show the futility of trying to discover the meaning of a word with a capital 'M', or, to put it differently, to discover or identify the essence of concepts in the abstract, say, truth, justice, good, beauty, courage, and tolerance, etc. What is needed is a survey of the concrete spectrum of the uses of a word. However, this analysis, which may well be called contextual analysis, may and should be supplemented by a phenomenological or conceptual analysis in the sense of identifying the bare minimum connotative meaning of a word in a specific context and then differentiating it from Cognate or related concepts. Contextual analysis is best done by translating the analysandum into expressions, which are simpler and/ or clearer and easier to use, according to current rules of the language concerned as compared to the original expression or statement.

Applying the above method of contextual analysis, let us analyze the statement, *"Ram is a tolerant person".* Most English speaking persons would agree that the above sentence is true or the word "tolerance" has been rightly used under the following conditions. These conditions are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

> Ram befriends or is willing to befriend those who differ from him, but are otherwise honest.
> Ram tries to understand the other's point of view with sympathy.
> Ram does not believe, unless there be clear evidence that those who differ from him are dishonest, or ill-motivated, or perverse.
> Ram realizes that beliefs, attitudes or approaches other than his own could possibly be right or justifiable.
> Ram realizes that while judgments of fact or of logic can be settled conclusively, judgments of value cannot be so settled, making disagreement almost unavoidable and understandable.
> Ram does not allow his differences with others to cloud his judgment concerning their good points, or to be vindictive or hostile to them in other matters or situations.

Likewise, the statement, *"Indian society is tolerant",* may be analyzed as follows.

> Most Indians are tolerant persons in the above sense.
> All Indians, irrespective of caste, color, creed, or sex, have equal rights, duties and opportunities both in theory and in fact, though the ideal may not be perfectly realized due to human limitations.

The Indian way of life does not directly or indirectly adversely affect the self-realization, recognition, and reward of Indians on the basis of their caste, color, creed or sex.

Let us now attempt to supplement the above analysis with a phenomenological or conceptual analysis of *"tolerance"*. Tolerance, as a basic attitude towards others or as a moral value, usually develops under the following conditions: (a) awareness of plural truth-claims, (b) experience of existential perplexity, (c) spiritual autonomy or inner freedom, (d) awareness of distinction between subjective and objective truth, (e) awareness of man's historicity or cultural contingency, (f) respect for other minds or persons, (g) capacity for empathy.

Awareness of plural truth-claims, inner questioning, and perhaps a measure of existential perplexity constitute the seed which grows into the tree of tolerance, provided the seed is watered by inner freedom and intellectually nourished by two basic concepts, (a) truth as subjectivity and (b) culture as historicity or contingency. Respect for the other and the capacity for empathy, though perhaps not strictly essential for the genesis of tolerance, do in fact greatly facilitate its birth and growth, since existential perplexity is intensified, when a person realizes that someone whom he deeply respects holds different views or values. When the difference pertains not to matters of taste, but concerns moral, religious, political or philosophical issues, respect for the other predisposes a person towards tolerance as a way of life, or style of personality orientation. It may be said that existential perplexity is also merely helpful rather than being an essential condition for the genesis of tolerance, or an essential element of the concept of tolerance. This is a plausible view, since we can well imagine a sage or spiritual genius who is the picture of deep commitment to values and of complete tolerance without having known the tensions or pains of existential perplexity. Such points, however, do not matter much even if they cannot be settled.

Let us now distinguish the concept of tolerance from some other psychologically related or cognate concepts with which it is liable to be confused. (1) A tolerant person may, but need not, be a skeptic or atheist. Indeed, tolerance is perfectly compatible with the most passionate and profound religious faith or commitment to basic values as also with skepticism. (2) A tolerant person may, but need not, be indifferent to religion. Even if he is indifferent himself, a truly tolerant person would respect a person who is genuinely religious, and if the tolerant person be also brave enough, he would stand up for the rights of the religious person. *"I do not believe a word of what you say, but I shall give my life to defend your right to say so",* admirably sums up the matter. (3) A tolerant person may, but need not, be secular in the current sense of keeping the functions of the church and of the state apart. If a religious person upholds the organic unity of the church and of the state and if his religion does not demand any discrimination against other groups or within his own group, the practice of tolerance would be quite possible in consonance with his religion. Since, however, most religions do, in fact, have some in-built elements of inter-group or intra-group discrimination (in some form or other), tolerance cannot be

put into practice without separating the church from the state and viewing religion as primarily a moral-spiritual experience rather than a set of political and socio-economic laws binding upon its followers. But secularism is neutral with regard to belief in God and the hereafter, and commitment to secularism does not imply or even suggest that the secular person is a theist, atheist, or agnostic, though it certainly does imply de-linking the respective spheres of religion and state. (4) A tolerant person may, but need not, be apathetic towards persuading others to his own values or beliefs. Apathy is not any index of tolerance, but only unconcern for others. But the concern of a tolerant person for others is always tempered by sympathy and tender humility instead of being a conceited imposition of one's own values as the one and only truth. (5) A tolerant person may, but need not always or habitually, practice a discreet silence in the face of conflicting truth-claims. Tolerance is not passive acquiescence to opposed views for fear of giving offence to others or the fear of communication. Tolerance is perfectly compatible with free communication and spontaneous self-expression in an atmosphere of mutual respect and good will. In the long run, communication helps to promote tolerance and greater harmony despite making un-bridged differences clearer or more articulate. (6) A tolerant person may, but need not, be given to habitual appeasement of those who disagree with him. Tolerance is an intrinsic value like love or beauty, while appeasement is a strategy for avoiding conflict and achieving success. It may lead a man to voluntary risks and sacrifice for impersonal ends, while appeasement implies expediency and following the least line of resistance. Indeed, a tolerant person may well be extremely firm and unbending in discharging his moral obligations and in resisting moral evil.[3]

To round off the above conceptual analysis, it must be added that tolerance, like truth, love, power, has several dimensions, and further that each dimension has a scale. Thus a person or society may be tolerant in one sense, but not in another and may show different degrees of tolerance on any particular dimension. A person may tolerate, *i.e.* willingly accept a close political relationship with a person of a different race, religion or caste, but not be prepared for close friendship or marriage. Again, a person may be tolerant of differences within a cognate group, but not of inter-group differences. Likewise, a person may fall short of full tolerance even on a single dimension, as Locke failed to tolerate atheists, or Madan Mohan Malaviya failed to tolerate non-Brahmans on the dining table.

In view of the different dimensions and degrees of tolerance, no individual or society may properly be judged as tolerant or intolerant on an either or basis. Rather the elements and degrees of tolerance or intolerance should be identified. Even if no society be perfectly tolerant, it could be graded.

CONCEPT OF TOLERANCE IN INDIAN CULTURE

To the best of my knowledge, there is no exact equivalent of the word *"tolerance"* in the Seminar's sense in Sanskrit. The word "*ksama*" which has been used in the *Gita* and other works means endurance, which was also the original sense of the English word.

Likewise, the Sanskrit word *"sahana"* also means endurance or forbearance, while the derivative *"sahanasilata"* means the trait or character of endurance. The word "*ksama*" as used in modern Hindi means forgiveness. The expression *"sarva-dharma-samana-bhava"* has been coined in some quarters for secularism in the highest sense. But, as we have seen, tolerance, in the Seminar's sense, is a wider concept than "equal respect for all religions", since tolerance applies to much that is not religion, say, art, literature, manners, morals, and taste, etcetera, or even opposed to religion, like Marxism, Freudian psycho-analysis, and nihilism, etc.

The absence of a Sanskrit word, however, does not mean that the attitude or value of tolerance was not known in ancient India.[4] The Jaina doctrine of *anekanta-vada* and the Hindu approaches of *adhikara* and *ista-devata* capture the spirit of tolerating plural truth-claims in all walks of life. Viewed as a methodological concept, *anekanta-vada* is a subtle and fruitful analytical tool. Likewise, the Hindu meta-theory of philosophy that philosophers give us different partial views or perspectives *(darsana)* of one and the same reality, which accommodates all the partially correct views, none of which is, however, totally true, also makes the same point and serves the same purpose.[5]

The concept of *adkikara* in the sense of *"level of competence of a person",* and the doctrine of *adkikara* that truth should be formulated in accordance with the level of understanding or competence of different persons who all differ from each other also serve to promote tolerance.

The concept of means worshipping the essentially formless divine Being in any form of one's own choice. This implies that no one form can claim to be intrinsically more desirable than another, so that the desire to convert others or bring about uniformity in belief and worship is uncalled for. It is difficult for a non-specialist in Indian philosophy, like myself, to say whether the concept of *ista-devata* could logically be, or has actually been, extended to embrace agnosticism or atheism. But perhaps this extended use may be deemed plausible, since belief in God or *Isvara* is not an essential element of Hindu orthodoxy. As we know, Hindu orthodoxy means essentially belief in the infallibility of the *Vedas.* Again, if a person denies this belief, could it be said that this denial is his *ista-marga* and that he should be permitted to take to this path without attracting any penalty in any form? As we know, the Jains and Buddhists did deny the sanctity of the *Vedas,* and most probably no bodies were put on stakes to save souls.

The concept of *anekanta-vada* and the twin concepts of *adhikara* and *ista-devata* or *ista-marga* thus jointly do the conceptual job of the word "tolerance" in the Seminar's sense. Whether this concept was translated into practice or not, and if so, to what degree and at what time and place, whether there were periods of tolerance followed by intolerance or a primitive intolerance gradually evolved into tolerance (as happened in western Europe from the late 17th century onwards) — all these questions are matters for historical enquiry. Thus initial intolerance by Aryan victors over non-Aryan or Dravidian

people may have led later on to an extended period of cultural fusion resulting in classical Hinduism. The point is that the period of Indian pre-history is so long that a suspension of judgment becomes methodologically essential. However, the full implications of authentic scriptures, law books, literature, folklore, and reliable social-cultural records should be used to answer the historical question concerning the role of tolerance in Indian culture.[6]

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND THE CASTE SYSTEM

Tolerance, in the fullest sense, embraces differences in the total spectrum of human life, language, dress, customs, food habits, morality, religion, art, politics and social institutions. I shall confine myself to politics and religion in this paper, as it is precisely these two, along with language, which provide the stage or scenario in most societies for the demon of intolerance whenever it casts its evil shadow over humans.

The struggle for political power leading to military conflicts is a universal feature of the human situation, and Indian society has been no exception. Rather the struggle for power was even more pervasive and incessant because of the ambition or aspiration of each and every ruler to become the "Cakravartin" or the overlord, the king of kings ruling in their own smaller territories. And the whole of the Indian sub-continent from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari, and from Dwaraka in the west to Puri in the east was the Cakravartin's legitimate jurisdiction as the first step towards a universal commonwealth based on *dharma.* Wars and battles were, however, the sport and the business of kings and their warriors who won and lost without seriously affecting the lives and fortunes of the common man in the territory of the victor or of the loser in the tournament of kings. This was also more or less true in other parts of the world until medieval times, apart from the great risk of religious persecution of the subjects of the vanquished prince. In India, however, this sort of persecution hardly ever occurred.

Indian history does not point to any massacres, forcible mass migrations, religious bans, forced conversions. The movements of reform or spiritual renewal, like Jainism and Buddhism, which were roughly contemporaneous, were based on free exchange of ideas and challenging the authority of the *Vedas.* It is significant that this challenge was made in the name of reason, the right of free enquiry and the ethic of large-hearted tolerance, and further that this challenge was met by the Vedic orthodoxy, not by the sword, but by the pen. Both Mahavira and Gautama Buddha initiated an era of peaceful change, shifts in meaning of basic concepts and values, new cultural symbols and practices and an inner spiritual renewal to cure the hardening of the spiritual arteries of the Vedic priests (lost in the esoteric intricacies of *Mimamsa)* and to improve the spiritual and moral health of the vast populace sunk in the torpor of ritualistic conformism and the prison of caste.[7]

After centuries of cross-fertilization of ideas and an extended dialogue between Indian classicism (represented by Vedanta) and the then modernism (represented chiefly by Buddhism), Hinduism (represented by the *Gita)* displaced Buddhism from the land of its

birth. Meanwhile, Buddhism itself had undergone considerable inner transformation in the course of the extended peaceful dialogue. As we all know, the presiding muse of this super-Marathon cultural dialogue was *Sankaracharya* who died in the 9th century.

In the course of later centuries when Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism developed or degenerated into *Tantrisrn*, the process was again peaceful. The socio-cultural dynamics of this interesting phenomenon is perhaps not fully grasped, but in any case, no coercion of the populace was involved.

The study of history and psychological analysis of human nature both show that intolerance and persecution, never lead to genuine conversion, but either to spiraling violence or a superficial uniformity of belief and practice destroying the very soul and purpose of religion. The vast cultural diversity of India in the form of different languages, religions, cults, laws, marriage and inheritance customs, manners, food habits, all testify to, and are explainable only on the basis of, a widespread tolerance rooted in the concepts of *anekanta-vada, adhikara, ista-devata* or *ista-marga.*

Having surveyed the impact of the above basic concepts, let us now analyze the implications of another fundamental principal or postulate of Hindu society, *viz.,* the caste system. Social gradation by caste has been not only the *de facto* social reality in Indian society from time immemorial, but is also a *de jure* and sacred institution sanctified by all her scriptures, and traditionally deemed to be the very foundation or backbone of the Hindu religion *(varnasramadharma).*[8] Philosophers, historians, and social scientists must, however, discuss this concept with the utmost intellectual honesty without any admixture of apologetics.

Both actual social reality and plain scriptural texts make it evidently clear that the fourfold classification of men is not a psychological classification of personality types cutting across religion, race, heredity, and social status, but a classification based on heredity and the accident of birth. The duties corresponding to each caste *(varnadharma)* do not flow from the person's actual traits *(gunas),* but from his pre-determined caste *(varna).* It is, therefore, misleading and futile to try to assimilate the caste system to the concept of class or of social gradation, as it exists outside Indian society. It is equally misleading to hold the caste system as some sort of anticipation of the modern psychological theories of human types or to assimilate the concept of *varnadharma* to the ethical theory of self-realization or Bradley's concept *of "my station in life and its duties."* Indeed, the caste system is a unique style of social gradation without any strict parallel in the rest of the world.

Some modern Hindu thinkers and writers (including Radhakrishnan) are inclined to hold that the caste system was originally a function of the actual endowment or personality structure of a person who acquired the status of a *Brahman or Ksatriya* or lost it, instead of being born as such. This is certainly a logically possible situation. But it seems to me

there is no evidence to support this historical claim, which, for all we know, might well have been the case. But even if we do accept this line of thinking, only a measure of occupational mobility was allowed to the upper or twice-born castes leaving the Sudras and the out-castes patiently to serve the higher castes as expiation for their sins *karma)* in previous generations.[9]

The conclusion of the above evidence is that, while Indian culture admirably tolerated doctrinal differences, it failed to develop the idea of toleration into the concept of humanistic respect of man as such. The humanistic protest of Jainism and Buddhism against caste could not be assimilated by Hindu orthodoxy, despite the spiritual renewal produced by these movements and the legacy left by Ashoka. The tremendous latent power and hold of the caste system obstructed the growth of fresh dimensions in the concept of *ista-devata* and *adhikara,* The idea of tolerance remained confined to the choice of the form of deity without developing into *ista-dharma* or the choice of vocation on the basis of one's ability and aptitude rather than one's pre-determined status by birth. It is both astonishing and tragic that the philosophical theory of the identity of Brahman and the Atman, (of Advaita Vedanta) giving such high ontological status and dignity to the human soul *(jiva)* as it does, did not lead to the simple ethical ideal of the dignity and equality of man, irrespective of caste, color, creed, or sex.

Hindu thought evolved the concepts of *ista-devata, ista-marga* and *adhikara, which* promoted religious tolerance. But it could not evolve the concept of *ista-dharma* (based on one's actual ability and aptitude) as distinct from *varnadharma* (based on birth within a caste). Likewise, Hindu thought could not evolve the concept of *adhikara* in terms of a humanistic right to self-realization. Thus equality of status is absent from the Hindu concept of man, and equality of opportunity from the Hindu concept of justice. If tolerance remains incomplete without equality of status, the Hindu concept of tolerance has only one leg to stand upon.

CONCEPT AND ROLE OF TOLERANCE IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

To the best of my knowledge, the Arabic and Persian languages also do not have an equivalent word for tolerance in the Seminar's sense. The words; *"tahammul", "him", "burdbari", "bardasht";* all mean endurance, steadfastness, or patience. However, the ideal of tolerance is certainly present in the *Quran* and also found in the conduct of the Prophet and the pious Caliphs.[10] But some of the schools of Islamic law *(shariat)* have unfortunately developed on lines (allegedly based upon the *Quran* and the sayings or practice of the Prophet) that certainly negate the concept of tolerance towards both Muslims and others. For instance, according to the classical or traditional Muslim view, a Muslim who repudiates Islam or commits apostasy *(irtidad)* attracts the death penalty. Again, if a Muslim does not repudiate Islam, but competent authorities deem his views or actions to amount to apostasy, the unfortunate Muslim may be held to be guilty of heresy and executed.[11] However, no school of Islamic law upholds the permissibility of coercing

non-Muslims to accept Islam or to give up their faith, though inviting them to Islam is upheld as highly desirable for the Muslim. We must remember that the above views are not Quranic textual injunctions, but only interpretations or inferences (rightly or wrongly) drawn from the text.[12]

Some Muslim theologians or jurists have expressed the view that the *Quran* and the sayings of the Prophet prohibit Muslims from befriending and trusting non-believers. An under-current of suspicion and prejudice does exist in the popular Muslim consciousness side by side with the inspiring humanism and tolerance of the great Sufi saints and poets.[13] Many non-Muslims also honestly believe that the *Quran* actually does prohibit Muslims from trusting and befriending non-Muslims just as it prohibits inter-marriage or idol worship. It must, however, be noted that a careful and honest reading of all the relevant Quranic texts (as distinct from the gloss or interpretation) in the light of the situational context of the Quranic verses makes it clear beyond any doubt that the *Quran* is free from such repugnant intolerance and anti-humanism that some Muslim interpreters unfortunately have projected into the Quranic text or deemed to be the correct Islamic view.[14] In any case the Muslim political establishment in India, *i.e.* the kings or sultans unhesitatingly rejected such interpretations. And this holds good, not merely of such eminently liberal and humanistic kings or princes as Akbar, Tippu or Dara Shikoh, but also of Muslim rulers in general.[15] The very, very few exceptions only confirm the general rule. It was precisely the religious liberalism and practical secularism of the kings that led to repeated tensions or conflicts between the Muslim political and the religious establishments in India.[18]

The position of the Sufi saints was different from the theologians or jurists. Barring the *Nakshbandiya* order and some other individual mystics, the Sufis, in general, stood for liberalism, universal tolerance and love. Muslim sovereigns understandably felt closer to the Sufis than to the theologians who were patently unhappy with the worldly-wise secular approach of the kings. However, there was a liberal section among the theologians as well, and it would be grossly inaccurate and unfair to paint them as monsters of intolerance and the Sufis as the paragons of humanism.[17]

The populace, Hindu and Muslim alike, deeply venerated the Sufi saints as the embodiment of religious piety, though the puritanical Muslim elements, especially among the urban middle classes, tended to look up to the Muslim theologians and scholars who were apt to frown upon the predilection of the Sufis towards music, *yoga* and Vedanta, their tendency to practice different types of innovations and give esoteric interpretations of the *Quran* which clashed with the plain and simple puritanical approach of the theologians. Thus a measure of innocuous tension existed between Sufis and theologians.[18]

Political tensions and the struggle for power obviously went on during the medieval period as in the ancient. The only difference was that sometimes the royal antagonists

and the warriors professed religious faiths of different origin instead of professing one common faith or its different variants as happened in the pre-Islamic period. But the struggles were always political and not religious wars between Hinduism and Islam. Often the teams of the antagonists were mixed groups, though perhaps the regiments or battalions were composed of single communities. It is not sheer accident that the *Moghul* general who defeated Shivaji in the beginning was a Hindu, while the person who helped Shivaji to escape from the *Moghul* fort in Agra was a Muslim.[19]

It is also deeply significant that the loyalty of subjects to their kings and princes cut across the distinction between Hindu and Muslim so long as the king could command military success by defeating his rivals. The warrior class helped and freely gave their lives for the king's cause, and their code of honor made them pledge their loyalty to the victor irrespective of his religion. Cases of revolt, rebellion, treachery, disloyalty, bribery, and corruption were human responses of the participants and not actions calculated to help the cause of Islam or Hinduism. This was secularism in action without bothering whether the state was secular or religious, or whether sovereignty rested in the people or in God.[20] This pragmatic secularism was rooted in the following social realities of the age: (a) the voluntary extension of the concept of *ista-devata* to the followers of Islam, (b) the voluntary extension of the *ksatriya-varna-dharma* to the Muslim warrior class and the princes, thereby viewing them as honorary or functional "Rajputs" and as an integral part of those who dwelt in India as their home *(Bharatavasis),* and (c) the firm and unwavering principle and policy of the Muslim sovereigns (barring very few exceptions) to keep the church and the state separate and distinct in practice, even if not in theory, despite the pressure of the orthodox theologians and their lobby in the corridors of power or in the counsels of the king. With one or two exceptions, the Sultans in North India, in general, and particularly the Sultans in the South and the *Moghul* emperors succeeded in rising above the din and dust of communal or sectarian slogans. Perhaps the sound political instinct and practical wisdom of the ruling class enabled them to see that the talk of *"Islam in danger"* was an unconscious strategy for obtaining maximum material gains or defending existing vested interests which were perceived as threatened by rivals professing a different faith.[21]

Coming to the cultural aspect, the medieval Indian society was a period of intense spiritual searching leading to the rise of the Sufi and *Bhakti* movements. The Hindu and Muslim saints held loving surrender to God (rather than external practices) to be the breath of true religion, and they preached and practiced love of God and love of man as two sides of a single coin. Holding universal kindness and goodwill and devotion to duty as the common ethical teaching of all religions, they repudiated all barriers of caste or creed.

The humanist message of Jainism and Buddhism thus came to life again in the framework of a simple, easily understandable, and emotionally moving theism, both Hindu and Muslim. The symbols of this movement are Kabir and Nanak in North India

and Ramanuja in the South, but there are numerous other great souls who inspired and elevated Indians of all castes and creeds, helping the common man in the villages and the cities to share the common joys and sorrows, and hopes and fears of life, the ceremonies of birth and death, the festivities of the season, of marriage and of religious occasions, the pleasure of folksongs and the wisdom of folklore — all cutting across the distinction of Hindu and Muslim.[22]

The emotional integration mentioned above, however, did not lead to a full-blooded and mature humanism which accords unconditional worth and dignity to the individual *qua* individual, irrespective of his caste, color, creed, or sex, and which also prescribes a multi-dimensional tolerance. The concept or ideal of humanistic tolerance, rooted in the study of world history and critical philosophy, entered the Indian cultural scene as a stable and effective factor only with the advent of Western liberal values in the 19th century.

Perhaps the most important single factor, which historically has inhibited the flowering of the ideal of the humanistic brotherhood of man on the Indian scene, was the traditional ban on both inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. Even when the British rulers legally provided for civil marriage, irrespective of the caste or religion of the contracting parties, an express declaration was required from them that they did not profess any religion. Evidently, this was a reluctant concession to both Hindu and Muslim orthodoxy. This irrational condition has now been removed, and conditions, political, cultural, and economic, are slowly arising which bear the promise of the growth of tolerance in all the spheres of Indian life and culture.

NOTES

1. The birth of religious tolerance in Western Europe dates back to the Renaissance in the 15th century, which drew inspiration from the wisdom and humanism of ancient Greece. The Christian Reformation, which led to plural versions of Christianity, created the need for tolerance, but the parallel authoritarian approaches of Luther and Calvin indirectly led to intolerance. The rise of the Counter-Reformation brought about the darkest era of intolerance in the Western world, which was soon to see the horrors of the Thirty-year War (1618-1648), which remains unparalleled in the annals of history for mass destruction and religious persecution. Perhaps the horrors of protracted violence for the sake of saving souls mentally and emotionally prepared Western Europe to listen to the philosophy of tolerance preached by John Locke of Oxford, the father of British democracy and the humanistic conception of the dignity and rights of man as such. However, even Locke was ill-prepared to tolerate atheists and also had some reservations against Roman Catholics. The idea of tolerance took almost two centuries for its maturity and application by John Stuart Mill in the third quarter of the last century, though it was fully present in the thought of Spinoza, Kant and Voltaire much earlier.

This shift of meanings is a regular feature of living languages and cultures. Different meanings or uses become prominent due to social and cultural changes. The mature critical philosopher or historian of ideas must try to understand the situational genesis of these changes and not remain content merely with linguistic and phenomenological analysis.

Politicians and administrators often practice appeasement but claim the virtue of tolerance. In some cases the appeasement leads to a tragic-comic intolerance and pseudo-religious piety, as happened some time ago in Tamil Nadu and Andhra. It was reported in the press that some *Harijans* notified local politicians that if the grievances of the *Harijans* were not rectified within a time bound period, they would embrace Islam. It was reported that the demands were promptly met. Evidently, the *Harijans* did not care for Islam, nor the politicians for Hinduism. The *Harijans* were motivated by expediency, and the politicians were guilty of appeasement.

Man's experience can be identified, described and classified in more ways than one. In view of the fact that human experience both resembles and differs from age to age or society to society, man's linguistic responses also both resemble and differ from each other.

This is also what Karl Jaspers appears to mean by saying that the philosopher ought to *'glide'* over conceptual space, which is sought to be mapped by philosophical theories. This also resembles John Wisdom's view that philosophical theories are neither true nor false, but illuminating and misleading and reflect both intellectual penetration and confusion in some form or other.

The following few quotations from innumerable Hindu, Jain and Buddhist sources will illustrate the spirit of tolerance found in Indian culture:

> As men approach me, so do I accept them: men on all sides follow my path, O Partha (Arjuna). (*Gita,* 4:11)
>
> Even those who are devotees of other gods, worship them with faith, they also sacrifice to Me alone, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), though not according to the true law. (*Gita,* 9:23)
>
> Whatever form any devotee with faith wishes to worship, I make that faith of his steady. *(Gita,* 7:21)
>
> Whatsoever being there is endowed with glory and grace and vigor, know that to have sprung from a fragment of My splendor.
> (*Gita,* 10:41) (All from Radhakrishnan's translation of the *Bhagavad-gita)*
>
> Cows are of many different forms and colors. Their milk is always white. The path of virtue, like milk, is one. The sects that teach it are manifold. *(Naladinanuru* quatrain 118)

All paths of realization, though manifold and different according to (different) traditions, flow to you only, even as all streams of Ganga flow into the ocean.
(Kalidasa in the *Raghuvamsa* as quoted in V. Raghavan, *The Great Integrators.* Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, 1966, p. 76)
In You, O Lord! Arise all viewpoints, even as all rivers rise out of the ocean and just as the ocean cannot be seen in those rivers so long as they remain separate, even so, You cannot be seen in the separate viewpoints. (Siddhasena Divakara as quoted in Raghavan, *op.cit.,* p. 78)

The Beloved of the Gods... honors members of all sects... by gifts and various honors. But he does not consider gifts and honors as important as the furtherance of the essential message of all sects. By doing this one strengthens one's own sect and helps the others, while by doing otherwise one harms one's own sect and does a disservice to others. Whoever honors his own sect and disparages another man's... does his own sect the greatest possible harm ...
(From Twelfth Rock Edict of Asoka).

It is held in some quarters that the near complete disappearance of Jainism and Buddhism from the land of their birth proves mass persecution of their adherents by the Brahman establishment. But this inference is based on *a priori* reasoning rather than empirical evidence. There is some evidence of Jains having been persecuted and of the destruction of their temples in South India in the Pallava and Chola period, in Gujarat, and also in Kashmir (See A.B.M. Habibulla, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India,* Allahabad, 1961). Also, there is some evidence of inter-sect violence in the south. But the scale of such happenings is trivial in relation to the violence in other parts of the world. According to Voltaire's calculations, approximately ten million souls lost their lives in the space of about 200 years due to religious persecution in Western Europe. The record of medieval Islam does not bear any such blemish, and Jews and Christians enjoyed security of life and property and opportunities of material progress in Muslim countries, but the degree of tolerance of dissent within Islam was appreciably less than in India, or classical China and Japan. Western Europe, however, became the nursery of a progressively growing tolerance from the late 18th century onwards.
The *Gita* (3:35) is unmistakably clear on this point:

"Better is one's own law though imperfectly carried out than the law of another carried out perfectly. Better is death in (the fulfillment of) one's own law, for to follow another's law is perilous."
The provision that the caste position of a Hindu could be upgraded or downgraded after seven generations under specified conditions does not disprove the essentially hereditary basis of caste. The dozen or more categories of intermediate or mixed castes (depending upon the original caste of the male or the female parent) as also the social

stigma attached to a child born of a *Sudra* father and a Brahman mother show the true nature of the concept of caste. Radhakrishnan quotes one or two instances of a sage in the remote antiquity having taught philosophy to a lowborn pupil. Even if this had actually happened, this does not go to show the functional nature of caste in remote antiquity.

10. The following verses of the *Quran* may be noted:

There is no compulsion in religion... (2: 256)

...We have not sent thee (Mohammad) as a keeper over them (non-believers), nor art thou responsible for them... (6: 108) And if thy Lord willed, all who are in the earth would have believed together. Wouldst thou (Mohammad) compel men until they are believers?   (10: 100)

Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom, and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way. Lo! Thy Lord is best aware of him who strayeth from his way, and He is best aware of those who go aright.   (16:125)

But if they (non-believers) are averse, we have not sent thee (Mohammad) as a warder over them. Thine is only to convey (the message)... (42: 48) And I (Mohammad) shall not worship that which ye (poly-theists or heathens) worship. Nor will ye worship that which I worship. Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion.   (109: 4-6)

Also noteworthy is Caliph Umar's refusal to pray within the premises of a church in Palestine after the Muslim conquest on the ground that this may be made an excuse later on for converting it into a mosque. The *Quran* repeatedly refers to all places of worship as sacred and worthy of respect.

11. The story of the martyrdom of Mansur Hallaj and of Sarmad is well known. But perhaps the most tragic and shameful instance of the penalty is the execution of Buddhan Brahman, a learned saint of the 16th century, during the time of Sikander Lodi. As a Hindu, Buddhan could not have attracted this penalty. Since, however, he had happened earlier to praise Islam, the establishment (on some perverse logic) gave him the option either to embrace Islam or face death. The tragedy took place a few years before the advent of Babar in India. Most probably, political motives were the real cause, as in the cases of Mansur and Sarmad.

The traditionally approved death penalty for apostasy *(irtidad)* is the height of intolerance and is patently incompatible with the Quranic verse that there is no compulsion in religion. The fear of internal disruption of the nascent Islamic church-cum-state may have led the early Muslim jurists to this indefensible view. But unfortunately this approach was never repudiated even when Islam had achieved a dominant position, and there was no question of any threat of internal disruption or external attack. This provision still remains part of the Islamic religious law *(shariat),* and may be invoked by the religious establishment (whenever it may so choose) for stifling free enquiry or suppressing honest dissent. It is this law which has produced self-alienation and fear of authentic being in the Muslim mind or psyche, and obstructed the growth of spiritual autonomy and the spirit of

free enquiry, and also a large hearted tolerance of honest dissent within the fold of Islam, as distinct from a rather condescending tolerance of other faiths.

It must be conceded that some theologians strangely maintain that force is permissible for creating external and psychological conditions for eventual inner conversion to Islam, though they have never stood for coercion leading to death. The belief that Islam gave to the conquered peoples the option between annihilation and conversion to Islam is, however, an exercise in pure imagination on the part of either misinformed historical innocence or perverse hostility.

The spirit of tolerance found among the Sufis is beautifully illustrated by the following anecdote from the poem, *Mantiq-ut-Tair* (the logic of the birds) by the famous Sufi, Farid-ud Din Attar (d.1229). Once the angel Gabriel came to know that God was especially pleased with, the adoration of some devotee. Gabriel tried to trace the privileged soul, but all in vain. He then approached God for information. And lo! God directed Gabriel to proceed to a temple in Run (Turkey) where he found an idol worshipper absorbed in worship. Shocked, Gabriel went back to God, only to be told that the idolater was worshipping God himself, though traces of ignorance were present in his heart.

As regards prejudice and suspicion among Muslims against non-Muslims, even such eminent figures as Ghazzali (d.1111), Ahmad Sarhandi (d.1624) and Wali Ullah (d.1763) are guilty of such irrational sentiments and views.

14. The relevant Quranic verses have been analyzed by me in my paper, *"How I see the Quran?"* with much sadness and indignation in the interests of intellectual honesty. I give a few shockingly revealing quotations from some eminent Indian Muslim theologians. Unless Muslim scholars and public men *suo motto* express their unqualified disapproval of such anti-humanistic interpretations and sentiments that unfortunately passed muster in the medieval period as true Islam, no honest and well-informed person could repudiate the charge of intolerance against Islam, or claim that it preaches true dignity and brotherhood of man. Here is a specimen of the 20 conditions for permitting Hindus to acquire the status of *zimis* according to Shaikh Hamdani of Kashmir in his *Zakhirutul Muluk.*

They (Hindus) are not to dress like Muslims.

They are not to give each other Muslim names.

They are not to ride on horses with saddle and bridle.

They are not to possess swords and arrows.

They are not to build their houses in the neighborhood of those of the Muslims.

They are not to mourn their dead with loud voices.

They are not to pay Muslim slaves.

(Folios 94a-95a, as quoted in Wm. Theodore de Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition,* New York 1956, p. 490)

Pious Muslims should be posted to the provinces so that they may collect taxes in accordance with the principles of *Shara*. No *Kafir* should find any office or employment in the Diwan of Islam as well as in the Capital of Islam. Posts of *Amirs* and *Amils*

should be barred to them. Furthermore, in conformity with the principles of *Shara*, they should be subjected to all types of indignities and humiliations. They (the Kafirs) should be made to pay revenues, and *jizya* and *zakat* on their goods should be levied as prescribed by *Shaura*. They should have no parity with the Muslims in matters of dress, and should be forced to keep their *kufr* concealed, rather than be allowed to perform ceremonies of *kufr* openly and freely. Stipends should not be paid to them from the *Baitul Mal* of Islam, but they should confine themselves to their own professions. They should not be allowed to consider themselves equal to the Muslims, so that the glory of Islam may reach its zenith.
(Letter of Sh. Abdul Huddus of Gangoh, letter No. 169 to Emperor Babar as quoted in S. A. A. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movement in Northern India,* Agra, 1965, p. 245)

Everyone has some desire in his heart. The desire of this Faqir is that the enemies of God and Prophet Muhammad should be dealt with severely and these wretches and their false gods should be insulted. You should rest assured that no action is more laudable before God than this one... We should strive hard to insult and condemn these wretches and their false gods... I would have come to you and persuaded you personally to do this act and might have utilized the opportunity by spitting on that idol and might have regarded it as my good fortune.
(Sh. Ahmad Sarhindi's letter to Murtaza Khan. *Maktubat,* Vol. I, letter No. 269 as quoted in Rizvi, *op. cit.,* pp. 303-307)

The honor of Islam is in insulting *kufr* and *kafirs*. One who respects the *kafirs* dishonors the Muslims. To respect them does not merely mean honoring them and assigning them a seat of honor in any assembly, but it also implies keeping company with them or showing consideration to them. They should be kept at an arm's length like dogs... If some worldly business cannot be performed without them, in that case only a minimum of contact should be established but without taking them into confidence. The highest Islamic sentiment asserts that it is better to forego that worldly business and that no relationship should be established with the *Kafirs*.
(*Maktubat Imam Rabbani,* Vol. I, letter 163, as quoted in S.A. A. Rizvi, *op. cit.,* p. 248)

The real purpose in levying *jizya* on them (the non-Muslims) is to humiliate them to such an extent that on account of the fear of *jizya,* they may not be able to dress well and to live in grandeur. They should constantly remain terrified and trembling. It is intended to hold them under contempt and to uphold the honor and right of Islam.
(Mujaddid's letter No. 163, Vol. I to Sh. Farid as quoted in Rizvi, *op. cit.,* p. 249)

Cow-sacrifice in India is the noblest of Islamic practices. The *kafirs* may probably agree to pay *jizya,* but they shall never concede to cow-sacrifice. (Mujaddid's letter No. 81 to Lala Beg as quoted in Rizvi, *op. cit.,* p. 249)

The Muslim sovereigns in India right from the Arab dynasties in Sind to the *Moghuls*, including the Turkish Sultans, firmly and consistently practiced tolerance towards their non-Muslim subjects who formed the vast bulk of the population, no matter what the stand of the religious establishment. The very few exceptions, Sultan Sikander (d. 1410)

of Kashmir, Firoz Tughlaq (d. 1388) and Sikandar Lodi (d. 1517) only prove the general rule. Much earlier, in the 10th century, Sultan Mahmud's hit and run ransacking of Hindu temples was unmistakably a search for gold rather than any devotion to Islam. Indeed, Qazi Abdul Hasan Baulami, the famous divine of Ghazna, openly disapproved of the Sultan's despoliation of temple wealth in India as anti-Islamic, and refused to accept the rich presents Mahmud sent him after one of his adventurous exploits in India.

It is also noteworthy that there was no mass destruction of Hindu temples in the medieval period, though some temples-were destroyed, as the Mahakala temple in Ujjain and other temples in Delhi, Ajmer and Jaunpur. In some cases the material of the demolished temples was used in mosques. However, the construction of new temples was discouraged without being prohibited. In any case, no restrictions were placed on public Hindu worship or celebration of festivals. Indeed, Hindu festivals were also celebrated by the Muslims, to the displeasure of some Muslim puritanical quarters, while Hindu masses showed great reverence and devotion to Sufi saints, both living and dead.

It may be said that Muslim Sovereigns were influenced consciously or unconsciously by the approach of Al-Beruni; one of the greatest savants of all time and the author of *Kitabul Hind,* wherein he had stated that the prima facie idolatry of the Hindus was quite compatible with the monotheism of Islam. The Muslim sovereigns stood for justice and tolerance and took their main task to be the efficient governance of the state and the protection of its territorial integrity rather than the spread of Islam or the reform of Hindu society. However, those who professed Islam did enjoy a privileged position by the very nature of the case in the then religiously oriented and hierarchical society. The earlier advantageous position of Muslims (especially of Turkish, Persian and Pathan origin) in the competition for power and prestige in the court and society in general gradually lost its weightage by the time of Akbar. Mutual sympathy and a genuine dialogue in the field of religion marked his long and prosperous reign. As also a creative synthesis in art, music, and literature, and the spirit of humanism and composite nationalism in politics.

Akbar's ideal of universal concord (*sulah-e-kul)* was not a new approach for the Muslim rulers in India. The essential novelty in Akbar's approach was his concern to give Islamic legitimacy to the *de facto* liberal approach of Muslim rulers in India. In other words, Akbar was, probably, interested in a sort of philosophical reconstruction of religious thought in Islam, like say, Sir Syed, Iqbal or Azad. This understandably provoked the theologians and some others (who could not appreciate the need for continuous growth in the concepts and values of a living cultural tradition) to charge Akbar with unwarranted interference in religious matters *(mudakhilat-fi-din).* However, the launching of the *Din-e-Ilahi* as an independent religion, rather than merely as a reinterpretation of Islamic thought, was an ill-conceived adventure, which proved to be stillborn. Reliable historians tell us that only approximately twenty persons (both Muslim and Hindu) joined the royal cult. But to be fair to the Emperor there was absolutely no coercion and no withholding of royal patronage from those who politely but firmly declined to embrace the royal cult.

The *prima facie* deviations of Akbar's successors were politically motivated. Even Aurangzeb functioned within broadly the same parameters with the same qualifications

(*viz.,* the reintroduction of the *jizya,* restrictions on state appointments at the lower level and discriminatory rates of taxation). However, the style of Aurangzeb's Islamic piety, as also his political perception, was different from those of Akbar or Dara Shukoh, though he was far from being a fanatic or bigot in the derogatory sense of the term. His demolition of one or two temples must be judged in the light of his endowing others.   Aurangzeb's grandson, Jahangir Shah, was deeply interested in Indian culture. *Tuhfatul Hind,* an encyclopedic work on Hindu sciences and fine arts, was especially composed for the benefit of the prince. Mirza Raushan Zamir who was appointed *Bakshi* of Surat by Aurangzeb translated a Sanskrit work *(Parijatica)* on music into Persian. Liberal Sufis remained quite influential during Aurangzeb's rule. However, it remains true that Aurangzeb's approach to religion was not humanistic and philosophical, but rather authoritarian and theological.

16. The following quotations from Ziauddin Barni's *Tarikh-i-Firozshahi* show the sense of helplessness of the religious establishment to influence state policy.

> How can piety and righteousness be established when philosophers and heretics (*bad-mazhaban*) who prefer Greek rationalism to the *sunnah* and who disbelieve the physical existence of heaven and hell, are allowed to openly spread their doctrines? How can the religion of God triumph when these people, the enemies of God and His prophet, live in the capital with dignity and ostentation and are not afraid to express their views?
> (Barni, *Tarikh-i-Firozshahi,* pp. 42-72, as quoted in A.B.M. Hahibullah, *op. cit.,* p. 333)

> ...How will the true faith prevail over other religions, if the kings of Islam, with the power and prestige of Islam which has appeared in the world... permit the banners of infidelity to be openly displayed in their capital and in the cities of the Muslims, idols to be openly worshipped and the conditions of infidelity to be observed as far as possible, the mandate of their false creed to operate without fear? How will the true faith prevail if rulers allow the infidels to keep their temples, adorn their idols and to make merry during their festivals with beatings of drums and *dhols*, singing and dancing? (Folios 119 a-b. Barni, *Fatawa-i-Jahandari,* as quoted in de Bary, p. 489).

17. There was no watertight division between theologians and Sufis as was the case before Ghazzali's classic reconciliation of theology and mysticism in Islamic thought through his life and works, particularly his *magnum opus, Thya ul ulum din* (Revival of the Religious Sciences). Thus several theologians were also practicing Sufis, though not all Sufis were scholars. The degree of tolerance practiced by theologians or Sufis ultimately depended, not on the Sufi order *(silsalah),* or the level of piety, or the scholarship of the person, but upon his personality type. Thus Sheikh Ahmad Sarhindi, one of the foremost Sufis, was conspicuous for his intolerance while Abdul Haq Mohaddis, a great theologian, had a liberal approach, though not so pronounced as that of Amir Khusro, Nizamuddin Auliya or Sharafuddin Yahya Manyari. In general, the Indian Muslims were attracted to the liberal Sufism of Nizamuddin Auliya, Sharafuddin Yahya Manyari, Sh. Aman Panipati, Miyan Mir, Shah Mohibullah, Sh. Burhan Shattari rather than the extreme puritanical Sufism of Sheikh Ahmad Sarhandi whose views remained confined to a very narrow

circle. Indeed, even the sons and other close followers of his spiritual preceptor, Khwaja Baqi Billah of Delhi, disagreed with Sheikh Ahmad Sarhindi's approach.

The tension between the religious approaches or attitudes of the saint and those of the theologian is one of the moving themes in much of classical Persian and Urdu poetry. Poetic license enables man's deeper feelings and attitudes to be fully expressed without the fear of censorship or the risk of giving offence to the orthodox.

Muslim kings acquired military victories because of superior artillery and reliance on cavalry. But they acquired political legitimacy and emotional acceptance by the common man because of the spirit of tolerance inherent in Indian culture. This tolerance in the sphere of politics may be called macro-tolerance as distinct from micro-tolerance in the religious sphere. Despite his vigorous opposition to the *Moghul* Empire, Shivaji stood for tolerance in his own affairs. His army had numerous Muslim soldiers, specially his artillery, even as the *Moghul* army had a substantial Rajput component. His conflict with the Emperor was basically political and populist rather than religious. His continual attacks on *Moghul* territory were in accordance with the then princely code of invading or looting neighboring territories for spoils or for territorial expansion. During his sack of Surat twice Shivaji did not spare its prosperous Hindus because of any religious sympathy or bond.

It is true that, after the end of the Abbaside Caliphate in Baghdad, some Indian Muslim rulers looked up to the Fatimide Caliphs of Cairo to confer spiritual legitimacy upon the Sultans who regarded themselves as shadows of the Caliph, the successors to the Prophet of Islam. But this was a pious fiction, which satisfied the religious establishment without depriving the Sultan of even an iota of his sovereignty in favor of a distant Caliph. Thus, the Sultanate was essentially a political rather than a religious institution. Even this pious fiction of *"recognition"* by the Caliph was formally discontinued by the Moghul emperors; who regarded themselves the shadow of God (*Zille Illahi*) and who vied in power and glory with the Fatimide Caliphs of Cairo.

The resentment shown by Muslim beneficiaries of state grants to theologians and scholars against Akbar's decision to extend the scheme to non-Muslim scholars as also his move to remove the abuses of the system well illustrates the tendency of vested interests to invoke the theory of religion in danger. It is both amusing and significant to hear the cry of "Hinduism in danger" in some quarters in contemporary India.

Among the mystics, saints, and poets of this period notable for their tolerance and humanism, mention must be made of Raidas (15th century), Mirabai of Rajasthan (16th century), Sankaradeva of Assam (16th century), Dadu of Rajasthan (d.1603), Tulsi Das (d.1623), Ramdas (d.1680) *guru* of Shivaji, Raskhan (17th century), Bullhe Shah (d.1758), and Tyagaraja (d.1847).

The following two quotations, one from Kabir (in Tagore's translation), and the other from Ramdas, well illustrate the spirit of the religious sensibility of the above saints who have been termed the great integrators by Raghavan.

    ... I do not ring the temple bell:
    I do not set the idol on its throne:
    I do not worship the image with flowers.

It is not the austerities that mortify the flesh which
are pleasing to the Lord.
When you leave off your clothes and kill your senses, you do not please the Lord.
The man who is kind and practices righteousness, who remains passive amidst the
affairs of the world, who considers all creatures on earth as his own self, he attains
the Immortal Being, the true God is ever with him.

I want not wealth, nor wife, nor rebirths,
I want not in me the pride of knowledge.
By the path of worship (*bhakti)* lead me to a life of goodness.
O Ram, this is all I ask of Thee now...
I have no skill of mind, no power of thought, no wisdom, or strength of reason.
I am Thy ignorant *bhakta,* give me an understanding heart, O Ram.
I know not how to talk or act. I do not understand my duties.
I am greatly troubled in my relations with men.
Give me an understanding heart, O Ram...

As I listen to the explanation of scriptures, a good thought enters my mind;

But it soon passes away as the time of giving up the fruit arrives.
But what shall I do, O Ram, I am unable to do what I ought.
O Ram, I cannot endure life without Thee.
(Ramdas in *Dasabodh* quoted in Raghavan, *op. cit.,* p. 138)

Apart from the Sufi and *bhakti* movements within Hinduism and Islam in medieval
India, the extended religious and cultural dialogue between these two great traditions
of the human family led to the birth of the Sikh Reform Movement, which has gradually
developed, into a distinct organized and institutional religion with a scripture and
priesthood, rituals and also sects. Originally rooted in tolerance and humanistic
brotherhood of man, Sikhism later on shrank to a rather narrow fraternity of those
prepared to fight against the Moghuls. Nothing, however, reveals the original catholicity
of the Sikh gurus better than their asking Mian Mir, the famous Sufi saint of Lahore, to lay
the foundation stone of the Golden Temple at Amritsar in the 17th century. Likewise, the
Gurudwara has always offered hospitality to all without discrimination. The later militancy
of the Sikhs against the Muslims was a political development whose genesis need not be
analyzed for our purpose here.

The following quotation from Guru Gobind is noteworthy:
As out of a single fire
Millions of sparks arise;
Arise in separation
But come together again
When they fall back in the fire.
As from a heap of dust
Grains of dust swept up

Fill the air, and filling it
Fall in a heap of dust.
As out of a single stream
Countless waves rise up
And, being water, fall
Back in water again.
So from God's form emerge
Alive and inanimate things
And since they arise from Him
They shall fall in Him again.

(Gur Gobind Singh, Dasama Granth, *Akal Ustat,* p. 269, as quoted in Raghavan, *op. cit.,* p. 156)