

Universalism

At the outset I want to make it clear to the readers that I am neither a philosopher nor a religious expert. As Einstein said, I am like a little child entering into the library. I will make a humble effort venturing into this complicated subject. In the last 50 years the world has seen a leapfrog jump in two areas, technology and politico-religion, if I may use that word. Politics and religion instead of running in parallel and independent of each other, they have merged or crossed in several parts of the world which is the root cause of the insecurity and fear of life we are experiencing in every walk of life. The advances in technology has made the life considerably mobile, comfortable and faster. On the other hand destruction of property, murders, and suicidal deaths have become the headlines almost every day.

First of all, let us see what is the term universalism means. It refers to religious, ethical and psychological concepts with universal application. It has a long history from antiquity to recent times. It was believed to be originated by Plato in fourth century B.C. Biblical universalism has had many proponents though out the ages. It has been a very influential concept in western thoughts, the belief in one universal religion.

We see universalism deep rooted in Hindu scriptures. Rigveda and Upanishads. Rigveda states, *Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti*. To what is one, sages give many names. Swami Vivekananda said, "we believe not only in an unlimited tolerance, but we accept all religions." It is practiced and spoken by all modern Hindu philosophers whenever they give discourses.

Anyone who reads the Quran without bias knows that Islam is truly universal. After Mohammed found the Muslim religion in 7th century, the Caliphate kings expanded the religion into most of the middle east, parts of China, Russia and Indochina, but never resorted to violence. Akbar, a powerful Muslim dictator, instead of imposing Muslim religion on the entire population, he emphasized diverse forms of religious behavior. He joined his wife in practicing Hindu festivals. He even tried to establish Din-Ilahi, drawing on different faiths in the country.

Similarly, Buddhism which originated in India and spread to several countries in Asia including China and Japan, but did not use any forceful methods. King Asoka who was instrumental in expanding Buddhism became so dejected after seeing blood shed of both the armies in last war, he banned killings. Founders of other faiths, Jainism, Judaism,

Sikhism and Confucianism etc. while teaching their methods of praying, deprecated violence and inculcated the idea accommodation. All of them, aforementioned, call for religious tolerance not religious indifference, and refrain from discriminating against those who follow a different religious path.

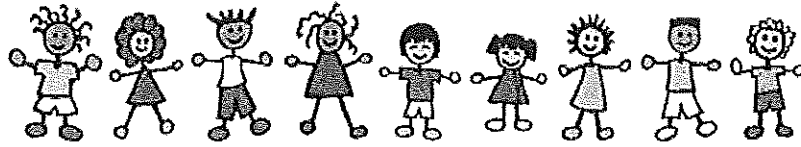
Yet there were few wars in the medieval period based on religious differences, such as Crusaders, German Peasants war, French religious war, the Thirty and Eighty year wars. Nevertheless, the world was peaceful through the discovery or machine age. American writers and philosophers of the 19th century, Emerson and Thoreau drawing the knowledge from Bhagwat geeta, acknowledged by these writers, put forth the theory of non-violence, self-reliance and religious tolerance which actually played a major role in the American politics. By the way both Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King credited these American writers for the non-violence methods they followed to achieve their goals.

The 20th century started with a theme of hope for increased cooperation between adherents of the world religions. On the century's eve, the 1983 Parliament of religions stood as one of the great expressions of such hope, as representatives of various religions traditions championed a world civilization shared religious values as its core. Swami Vivekananda was at this event. One would have thought with this background, and advances in information technology, economic interdependence a new emphasis for diversity should have been the evidence.

Unfortunately, hell broke loose 70 years ago. Conflicts arose and wars started between countries fixed on religion. British divided India positioned on the religious differences emerged again starting with a war between India and Pakistan. Hinged on religious differences Catholics and Protestants too fought a war in Ireland. Of course the middle east conflict took center stage of the world politics since 1967 and became a menace to the world's peace and economy today, with no end in sight.

In the name of religion billions of dollars' worth of property is destroyed and thousands are killed. So frequently by hundreds, people are dying by murders and suicides. The nations of the world are spending trillions of dollars to cope up with the challenges of conflicts, terrorism, and so called "maintain strength". The only solution I see for the theologians and religious leaders/kings, regardless of traditional faith, is to set aside fundamental and pure religious ideas and embrace universalism and follow the tenets of love and shun hatred.

-T. Ram Reddy



Best Wishes To

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on

INDIA DAY 2015

CHILDREN LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE

*If a child lives with criticism
He learns to condemn
If a child lives with hostility
He learns to fight
If a child lives with ridicule
He learns to be shy
If a child lives with shame
He learns to feel guilty
If a child lives with tolerance
He learns to be patient
If a child lives with encouragement
He learns confidence
If a child lives with praise
He learns to appreciate
If a child lives with fairness
He learns justice
If a child lives with security
He learns to have faith
If a child lives with approval
He learns to like himself
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship
He learns to find love in the world*

**Ram & Niranjani Reddy
& Their Children, Arvind, Sudha
& their Children**