



Rectifying Religious, Racial, Class And National Delusion And Combat In Today's World

Dr. Sarita Ranjan
Guest Faculty at Utkal University
Ph.D, M.A. (Gold Medalist)

ABSTRACT

Religious intolerance is growing in the country and is deeply getting divided on religious lines. Religious tolerance involves a form of pluralism: that is, the welcoming and fostering of religious diversity. It is the state of being where every individual in a religiously diverse society has the rights, freedom, and safety to worship, or not, according to their conscience. Is it possible for different ethnic and religious groups to coexist in one nation? Are open conflicts between 'civilization' inevitable or is political stability possible even in pluralist societies? The article explores some of the major world religions, and considers how these can help shape effective environmental¹ policy. At the heart of this article is a discussion of how religions can work with environment and development-focused organizations, both to provide alternative models of conservation approaches, and to develop programs for their own faithful. The world's religions can - through storytelling, spiritual guidance, practice, celebration, activism in their communities, and advocacy worldwide can become powerful, and effective partners in a wide range of conservation initiatives. The article explores the idea of religious belief as a source of motivation for behaviour change in the context of the global sustainability crisis. Undoubtedly religions have contributed enormously to society over the course of history as an organizing creative force. The presentation also includes a collection of the faiths' core statements on conservation.²

Keywords: sustainability, religion, polarization, natural resources, environment.

¹ Kramer, Harry P. "Environment: Past, Present, Future," Environmental Science and Technology, II (August, 1968), 602-605.

² D.W.Ehrenfeld, Conserving Life on Earth (1972).

OBJECTIVE AND PURPOSE

The objective and purpose of this article is to promote enduring daily interfaith cooperation to end religiously motivated violence and create the vision and mission to achieve global sustainable peace. The remedy lies in the intercultural dialogue that will create emphatic, inclusive, and resilient societies and fight against mistrust and polarization. We may believe in different heavens but we all live on this same Earth. What is needed is an all encompassing, overarching, all embracing common vision of the future.

INTRODUCTION

The world today is wild with the delirium of hatred. Divisive policies are the breeding ground for religious extremism. Hatred, greed, and selfishness have blinded people in the present world who are filled with the conviction to slay each other. Lord Buddha rightly said that “Hatred does not cease with hatred but with love”. It is increasingly necessary therefore that the lotus³ of love with an endless treasure of honey should bloom in every heart. In Buddhist teachings, these metaphors of hatred, greed, and selfishness suggest how menacing critical thoughts and emotions can be if they are not understood and transformed. Buddha describes these defilement (Kilesa) in Buddhism as Knots, fetters, and hindrances which are the actual root cause of unwholesome Karma⁴ and the entire spectrum of human agony. According to the Buddhist scripture Karaniya Metta Sutta, it is necessary to radiate boundless love towards the entire world - above, below, and across - unhindered, without ill will, and without enmity. Our strongest self-protection is the cultivated mind.

What a foe may do to a foe,
Or a hater to a hater—
Far worse than that
The mind ill held may do to him.

(Dhammapada verses 42)

It is significant that the great religions of mankind have insisted upon man’s oneness in spite of the fact that their followers have often proved to be the most bitter dividers of mankind.

We find in **Hinduism** -

“All men are equal as regards their physical organism.

All of them have souls which are equal in nature”.

(Hinduism regards all souls are equal and each living being on earth has an opportunity to evolve into higher life forms and work for their salvation. They may differ in their ability and intelligence but the soul is the same)

³ The Lotus Sutra, trans. By Burton Watson (Columbia University Press, 1993)

⁴ Burton Stein, A History of India, Oxford University Press, Delhi. 1998 (pg 66-67)

In Christianity -

“God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon
The face of the Earth ”.

(From one man God created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries).

Bible - Chapter 17 Verse 26.

In Judaism -

The Lord looketh from Heaven
He beholdeth all the sons of men
He fashioneth their hearts alike.

(From the place of his habitation Lord Jehovah looks upon all the inhabitants of the Earth. Although he had a special relation to Israel, yet he had a general care over all mankind). (**Psalm 33:13-15**)

In Islam⁵ -

All creatures are members of the one family of God.
Mankind was but one people.

(The holy Prophet Muhammad said: “All creatures are like a family of God and he loves most those who are kindest to His family”).

(Narrated by Anas. Mishkat al-Masabih, 3:1392; quoted from Bukhari)

The religious followers may have departed from their preaching but their intentions and motives were pure and that they are confirmed by the general conscience.

It is pertinent to know the causes of world misunderstanding and conflict to discover the bases of world understanding. Communication breakdown needs to be handled in a very sensitive manner by carrying on a civil conversation during tense times. The wars which take place, it is generally seen to be a clash of ideas and ideals viz capitalism versus communism. When old ideas are sought to be replaced by new ideas, war becomes inevitable. Men have a right to differ and they will always differ as a result of which there are bitter unending clashes and barbarous wars which are ready to destroy human existence in this world. Historically it can be observed that when warfare becomes endemic in a region, religion gets, as it were, sucked into the conflict and becomes part of the problem. This was certainly the case in eleventh century Europe at the time of the First Crusade. When warfare becomes chronic and violence an everyday occurrence, this affects people’s relationships, aspirations, dreams, fantasies, ambitions, and can also affect their religion especially if people lose hope in the ordinary political process and think that they have nothing to lose. The transition from a pre-modern to a modernized society and economy is painful. In Europe the process, which lasted from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, was

⁵ Richard Eaton , The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier , 1204 -1760: University of California Press, 1993.

punctuated by bloody revolutions succeeded by reigns of terror, dictatorships, wars of religion, and alienation in the newly industrialized cities. In the United States, protestants created the first fundamentalist movement at the time of World War I in order to protect Christianity, which, they felt, was imperiled by the new ideas and institutions.

A universal concept embodying the importance of relationship and a purpose greater than oneself is the Golden Rule. Karen Armstrong, renowned for her work on the Golden rule⁶ proclaims that “Unless we learn to implement the golden rule globally so that we treat all peoples, all nations, as we would wish to be treated ourselves, we will not have a viable world to hand on to the next generation”. There should be a thorough probe, in all religious traditions and at all levels of society, about the nature of religious texts and the way we read our scriptures. The rational bias of our scientific modernity has resulted in a new and unskillful literalism. In the pre-modern world, for example, Jews, Christians and Muslims all relished highly allegorical interpretations of scripture: as the word of God, it was infinite and could not be confined to one interpretation. There should be a serious study of the ideology and mythology of ‘fundamentalist’ or extremist religious groups. They should not be simply dismissed as the lunatic fringe, ignored, or regarded with secularist disdain, because these teachings often express anxieties and fears that no society can safely ignore.

Odisha, the holy land of Jagannath, has been a meeting ground of various challenging faiths and sects through the ages. Odisha possesses the wonderful spirit of assimilation of various religious faiths originating in the bosom of the Sanatana Dharma. Religion in the higher sense has an indispensable role in the effort to find peace. Religious groups should discourage double standards, the demonization of the ‘other’, and polarizing, dehumanizing mythologies, which are against the explicit teachings of all the great traditions. Only men with a religious devotion to great ends can heal the wounds caused by those with a religious devotion to little ends. It is a universal fact that none of the so-called ‘world religions’ condones or encourages killing. At their inception, they are all rooted in a disciplined rejection of violence. All promote the ideals of compassion, justice and respect for the sacred rights of the individual. This is no less true of Judaism than of Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism or Daoism. It is true, however, that all these faiths first developed in periods of great violence and that their scriptures often bear the marks of the warfare and aggression of their time. We see this clearly in the Jewish Scriptures, the New Testament and the Quran, which all contain passages that can and have been used by extremists to justify violence and intolerance. The Ricketty bridges between diverse religions needs to be addressed for the peace and sustenance of all.

⁶ Karen Armstrong 12 steps to compassionate life. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010.

The mind is the largest library of the universe. There is a parable in the book of Mathew in the New Testament that illustrates the benefit of evenness of mind: A fool constructed a house on sand and due to rains, winds and the floods the house fell down. On the other hand a man of wisdom built his house on a rock and no matter what the weather situation was, the house did not fall apart for it was built on a rock. An example from the Hindu text is that, all the knowledge that Krishna imparted to Arjuna already existed in Arjuna's mind yet Arjuna was unable to use his intellect to harness and utilize the knowledge⁷. The arrogance which teaches that any one Philosophy or religion is the exclusive possessor of all truth is no friend to human understanding. The religious leaders no sooner than they acknowledge the sources of the strength and weaknesses of their religion and accept the universal element in the great religions, the sooner the conflict in the name of God and religion would disappear. The certain values which are common to the great living religions of the world and which are sufficient to unite man is the law of love.

We note in:

In Hinduism -

“Who regards all creatures equally with an eye of love,
Who is righteous in his acts, and who is shorn
Of the desire of inflicting any kind of injury
That truly respectable man is adored in this world”.

In Buddhism -

“Grow in loving - Kindness: for, as you do so,
Malevolence will pass away.
Grow in compassion: for, as you do so,
Vexation will pass away”.

In Christianity -

“Owe no one anything, except to love one another.
He who loves the other, has fulfilled the law.

Confucianism -

“Persons without love cannot long dwell in adversity.
The loving are at peace in love.

In Taoism -

“In the way of Heaven , there is no partiality of love,
It is always on the side of the good man.

⁷ Bhagwad Gita, X, 20-41; translated by S. Radhakrishnan, in Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore. a source Book in Indian philosophy. Bombay: Oxford University press, 1957, pp.136 - 8.

In Jainism -

“Do noble actions, following the law,
Have compassion upon all creatures”.

It is important to note that the love which these religions speak is not sentimentalism rather it is related to acts of service to one's fellows, which is the final test of one's loyalty to love. So in Buddhism the devotee is enjoined to 'wait upon the other'; in Christianity to "bear other's burden"; in Confucianism to be "of use to others"; in Hinduism to "seek the well being of others", even to the sacrifice of his own life; in Islam to "to help one another in righteousness and piety"; in Jainism "to be a saviour to others"; in Judaism "never to turn from any fellow creature"; in Sikhism to "serve with heartfelt love"; in Taoism to "practice charity and duty towards his neighbour" and in Zoroastrianism to "be ready to serve to relieve the poor".

The religion of love imposes the doctrine of obligation of loving and respecting even those who differ from me in the most fundamental beliefs - this should be the base for human understanding to avoid conflict.

Society is currently facing a sustainability challenges and all **organizations** and **communities** have a role to play in moving society towards sustainability. The past is all around us. We live our lives against a rich backdrop formed by historic sites, buildings, landscapes and other physical survivals of the past. The historic environment is more than just a matter of material remains. It is central to how we see ourselves and to our identity as individuals, communities and as a nation. The heritage buildings in Odisha is lying in ruins and presents a genuine challenge to architects and designers to find innovative solutions to produce some excellent examples of creative designs that retain heritage significance. The article explores the idea of religious belief as a source of motivation for behaviour change in the context of the global sustainability crisis. It establishes the current reality of concern for sustainability within religious communities and aims to help potential change agents to adapt to the religious context and thereby enable a faster transition towards sustainability.

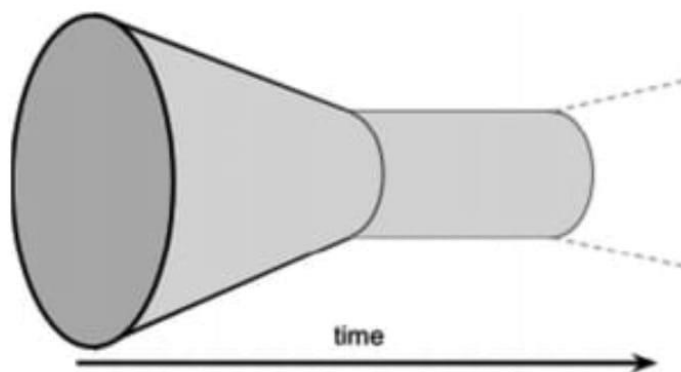


Fig 1. The Funnel metaphor visualizing the deceasing , stabilizing and potentially, growing carrying capacity of the Earth.

All life on Earth is inside this funnel and unless we stop the walls of the Funnel from closing in completely, we will not have the ability to survive as a species.

The above figure shows the Funnel metaphor to show the shrinking carrying capacity of Earth (**Robert 2000**): while economic, social and environmental pressures are growing, available natural resources are diminishing and the human population is growing. The question is how can we as a global interconnected society work on the sustainability challenge together?

The concept of sustainability is found in the scriptures of all world religions though there is no universal name for it. Instead each religion has a different teaching, sometimes in the form of a story that offers guidance on how to live a life that is in accordance with the religious principles. The concept of sustainability is recognized by all religious leaders however the level of understanding varies significantly. The following is a reflection on how religions have addressed religious commitments towards the environment.

In Buddhism:

The notion of karma alone, being an important part of Buddha's lessons, conveys the values of conservation and responsibility for the future. It is said that the morality of our actions in the present will shape our character for the future, an idea close of sustainable development.

Buddhist Connections and Reflection on Environment:

“As a bee - without harming the blossom, its color, its fragrance - takes its nectar and flies away: so should the sage go through a village.” (**Dhammapada IV, Pupphavagga: Blossoms, 49**)

“Drop by drop is the water pot filled. Likewise, the wise man, gathering it little by little, fills himself with good.” (**Dhammapada IX, Papavagga: Evil, 122**)

Hinduism: Hinduism is a religion deeply rooted in nature. The sacred text (Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Epics) has many references of divinity related to nature, such as rivers, mountains, trees, animals, and the earth. To protect them, Hinduism encourages environmental protection and there are organizations who promote sustainable development and support the protection of the environment through awareness campaigns and actions (**Green Faith, 2010**).

Christianity: “The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home”. (**Pope Francis, 2015**)

“When they all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, ‘Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.’ (**John 6:12**)

Islam: Hundreds of Quran verses support the protection of the environment. Many some Islamic organizations promote the relation between Islam and sustainability. Moreover, Islam prohibits the excessive consumption of resources the planet provides to the humanity (**Quran 7:31, 6:141, 17:26-27, 40:34**).

Judaism: In tradition, the land and environment are properties of God, and it is the duty of humankind to take care of it. The book of genesis, as an example, proposes that the garden in Eden was initially the chosen territory chosen by God for human to live.

Jewish Connections and Reflection on Environment: “And God said: 'Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed to you it shall be for food.” (**Gen 1:29**)

Taoism: Taoism, or Daoism, is an old Chinese religion based on the divine harmony between nature and humanity. Briefly, the Dao principle consists in ‘a path’ where you find the appropriate way to behave and to lead others.

Taoist Connections and Reflection on Environment: To know the constant law of nature is to be generous. Being generous, one is impartial. Being impartial, one is the sovereign. Sovereign is the nature itself.” (**Lao-Tzu, Tao Te Ching, Chapter 16**)

Harmonious Principles (Daoist Faith Statement, 2003): “The Earth has to respect the changes of Heaven, and Heaven must abide by the Dao. And the Dao follows the natural course of development of everything.”

“Those who have only a superficial understanding of the relationship between humanity and nature will recklessly exploit nature. Those who have a deep understanding of the relationship will treat nature well and learn from it.”

All religions agree that nature is an act of divinity and should be treated as such. Almost all religions address the issue of the creation of the universe, or universes, in different forms and with varying degrees of clarity or detail. However, all religions agree that the creation is an act of God and should be treated as such. Spiritual leaders at all levels are critical to the success of the global solidarity for an ethical, moral and spiritual commitment to protect the environment and God’s creation. These leaders can become observers, make public commitments, share the story of their commitments and the challenges and joys of keeping them, and invite others to join them. In addition, they can display their sustainable behaviors, serving as role models for their followers and the public.

Spiritual leaders at all levels are critical to the success of the global solidarity for an ethical, moral and spiritual commitment to protect the environment and God’s creation. These leaders can become observers, make public commitments, share the story of their commitments, display their sustainable behaviors, serving as role models for their followers and the public. It can thus be concluded that religious

communities have achieved remarkable behaviour change towards sustainability often in situations where non faith based communication failed. (Palmer and Finlay 2003)

References

1. Rhys Davids, *The Book of The Kindred Sayings (Saṃyutta Nikāya) or Grouped Suttas, Part1.*
2. Richard Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204 -1760: University of California Press, 1993.*
3. CMD Ketelbey, *History of Modern times since 1789, OUP, 2009.*
4. Will Durant, *The story of Civilization.*

