EXPLORING INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: TOWARDS PEACE AND CO-EXISTENCE

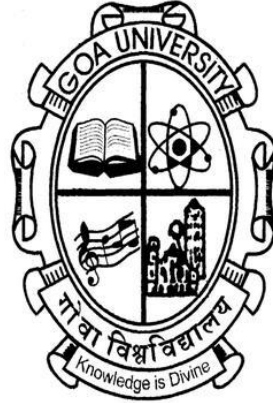**Doctor of Philosophy**

in

Philosophy

By

Fr. Jervasio Marceline Fernandes

School of Sanskrit, Philosophy and Indic Studies

Goa University

30th June 2022

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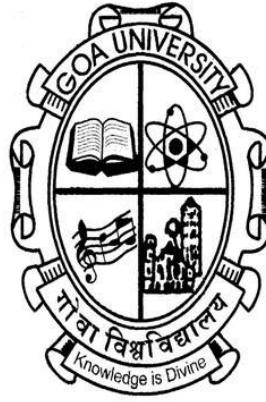*Thesis submitted to the Goa University in partial fulfilment of requirement for the award of the degree of*

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, late Mr. Marceline Manuel Fernandes, my father, my mother, late Mrs. Conceisao (Kosu) Fernandes, and my sister Mrs. Ruby Furtado. My father was honest and encouraged my primary education; I lost him in my childhood.

My mother was a strong yet gentle lady who faced difficulties in the same spirit and taught me to trust in God Almighty and hard work; my sister was my tutor and guide in my childhood and was another mother. They encouraged me for reading, writing, religious beliefs and higher education. I lost both, my affectionate mother and sister, within five months of each other. I loved them and appreciate everything that they have done for my all-round development. In loving memory of my father, mother and sister, with love and eternal appreciation and as a token of tribute this thesis is dedicated to them.

Fr. Jervasio Marceline Fernandes

DECLARATION

As required under the University Ordinance OB.9.9 (iv) I hereby declare that the entire work embodied in the thesis "**Exploring Inter-religious Dialogue: Towards Peace and Co-existence",** has been carried out by me. It is my original contribution and the same work has not been submitted in part or in full for any previous diploma or degree in this or any other University to the best of my knowledge. The present study is a comprehensive and critical work from the defined perspective in the mentioned references.

Place: Goa University,

Taleigao-Plateau,

Goa 403 206

Date: 30/6/2022   Fr. Jervasio Marceline Fernandes

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, "**Exploring Inter-religious Dialogue: Towards Peace and Co-existence**" submitted by **Fr. Jervasio Marceline Fernandes** for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy is based on his original analyses and critical reflection carried out under my supervision. The thesis or any part thereof has not been previously submitted for any other degree or diploma in any university or institution.

30 June 2022

Dr. Koshy Tharakan
Professor of Philosophy
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I am extremely grateful to the Respected Vice-chancellor of Goa University for authorizing me to study and carryout the research on my topic, "**Exploring Inter-religious Dialogue: Towards Peace and Co-existence.**"

I am indebted to Dr. Koshy Tharakan, Professor and Dean, School of Sanskrit, Philosophy and Indic Studies in Goa University and my guide, who channelled my thoughts in the appropriate direction thereby enabling me to complete this thesis. He has earned my deeper obligation not only for his readiness to help and to guide but by going through the drafts at every stage in the completion of my research work, and from time to time giving me valuable suggestions for improving the drafts. Till the final copy was ready he was advocating, encouraging and supportive of me. I am amazed to see his patience, depth of knowledge, his loving and helpful nature, and his co-operation in my research work. Without his generous assistance and guidance, it would have been difficult to complete the thesis, my reverence and heartfelt gratitude for his guidance and supervision. I am also extremely grateful to Dr Vinaykumar Rao, with whom I began the Ph.D. research work, for his confidence in me and his dedication for research in Indian Philosophy.

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INTRODUCTION

There is nothing that has brought more blessings, peace and love to humanity than religion; yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror, violence and hatred than religion. In the past, few things have involved man so totally and roused human passions so intensely or severely as religion. How many wars have been fought in the name of religion and God? For some people religion is to cherish the community, whereas for others it is to reject it entirely and there is another small community using religion for worldly ends. All these categories of people have one thing in common, that religion is a force to be considered and to be taken very seriously.

The great architectural wonders of the ancient world are eloquent symbols of the immense motivating power of religion. Prince Siddhartha renounced all the worldly pleasures of the royal palace and started a monastic movement. Jesus Christ meekly took up the Cross to bear witness to truth, love and peace, thus motivating to live the ideal at any cost. Religion, reaching out to the Infinite, is the larger discourse. It is against this backdrop that every other endeavour blossoms. However, Religion has been used and abused umpteen times to achieve some noble, and some other not so-noble, ends. However, Religion seems to have occupied a prominent place in the human psyche and further seems to have played an extremely crucial role in the socio-political life of individuals in a constructive way. This fact implies the misconceptions about religions to be corrected and scepticism should be forbidden.

 Religious revivalism is spreading all over the globe with certain fanatic aggressiveness. Politicians in various countries, becoming increasingly aware of the great opportunities provided by religion, are utilizing religion for their political ends. What is needed in this scenario is to find enduring solutions of love, peace and harmony among humanity. To achieve this, one of the important steps is to develop a culture of inter-religious dialogue among various communities. Dr Hans Kung, a Professor of Ecumenical Theology and President of the Global Ethic Foundation formulated the following definition: "No peace among the nations, without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions

without dialogue between the religions. No dialogues between the religions, without investigation of the foundations of the religions."[1]

This is a fact that has been recognized by one and all, as general initiatives are being taken at local, regional, national and international levels. What is most distressing is the fact that religions work hand in glove with the forces of *adharma,* thereby defeating the very reason for their existence: universal love and peace. Love and peace are the implicit if not explicit ideas of almost all the religions.

One of the driving forces to found a new religion like the Sikhism was aimed at reconciliation between Hinduism and Islam and thereby to foster peace, harmony and love amongst the devotees. Guru Gobind Singh, in the Akal Ustat, indicates:

> The temple and the mosque are the same,
> Puja and Namaz are the same,
> All men are one; it is through error,
> that they appear different.[2]

If such are the ideals of the world religions, why do people, in the name of religions, cause so much rivalry between the nations and the people of different faith? Why do religions cause so much violent conflict and bloodshed? With all their energy and potentials how do religions become insignificant before the unchallenged march of *adharma*? In the world there is so much wealth but as we look around, on one side there is luxury and on the other side there is dehumanizing poverty, denial of justice on the basis of colour, race and creed, and in the numerous other ugly manifestations. How can we properly channelize the precious energy-potential kept locked up in religions to establish the dharma aspired to by all the world religions?

I. Objective of the thesis:

By emphasizing the potential of inter-religious dialogue, the thesis aims to highlight the following: i) Religions will get out of their -narrow world by widening their horizons through Inter-religious interactions. ii) This interaction will help religions to develop for themselves an inner mechanism for self-criticism and self-purification. iii) Such a mechanism triggered by inter-religious interactions will prevent the blind emotional dimension of religion from becoming a destructive and fanatic energy and will sublimate it

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[1] Hans Kung, *Islam, Past Present and Future,* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2007), p. xxiii.
[2] Quoted in Dr. Ishanand Vempeny s. j., *Games we Religious play: Some Keys to Renewal*, (Delhi: Media House, 1997), p. 111.

for creative purpose. iv) Religions will cease to be a dead weight from the past and the most organized body for the defiance of the status quo will become a powerful progressive force for a better world. v) These will lead to the growth and enrichment of each religion, not at the cost of others, but in terms of total welfare and universal harmony. These objectives are expressed through the inter-religious dialogue.

This thesis is related mainly to the Semitic religions i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, since they have the same origin, same belief in monotheistic God, and have a common Scriptural belief, Abraham as the common ancestor of the Semitic religions. Then why do we have this dispute in the wilderness? Why there is so much tension in the Semitic world? I believe only inter-religious or inter faith dialogue will help us to overcome the difficulties and problems.

India is a privileged nation to undertake and to promote inter-religious dialogue since India has many world religions and nowhere else have so many religions taken deep roots. India has the second largest Muslim population and Indian Christianity has its history from the 1st century itself. Indian history, ethos and mind-set are especially suited to inter-religious dialogue. Due to the prevalent socio-economic and religio-political situations, unless this sort of dialogue is encouraged with serious concern and promoted with growing enthusiasm, communal riots and bloodshed will be on the increase, and the ideals of universal love, welfare and peace will become more and more like unattainable dreams.

Swami Vivekananda was well aware of the malice brought about by and in the name of Religion. For him, religion is deeply rooted in man's consciousness, and more close to the human heart than the jugular vein. Hence, he knew religion cannot be banished even if we wish to, rather, the misconceptions about them need to be corrected and scepticism driven away. Thus for him the ideal of Universal Religion should be capable of making one a better Christian, a better Hindu or a better Mohammedan; thus the whole human beings would be better beings.

II. Structure of the thesis:

The thesis is divided into Introduction and five Chapters.

Chapter I: Religion and the Search for the Ultimate Reality.

This chapter highlights the religious perspectives regarding the ultimate reality. Here I will be discussing only the contemporary major religions in India with a view to exploring the desirability and plausibility of peaceful coexistence of Religions. In order to do that, we first need to understand the differences between these Religions as well as convergences. Thus, I elucidate the notion of the Ultimate Reality according to each of these Religions in relation to the notion of God.

Chapter II: Religious Dialogue and Contemporary Indian Philosophers.

This chapter discusses the contemporary idealist and integral trend in some of the contemporary Indian philosophers of Dialogue, namely Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, and Bhagvan Das who represent the idealist strands regarding the ultimate reality. These philosophers stress harmony and co-existence among various religions and not the abolition of their diversity.

Chapter III: Inter-religious Dialogue: The Controversies, Conflicts and Challenges.

This chapter deals with some of the thorny issues that derail peace among religions, particularly the Semitic religions. Today the major threats to inter-religious dialogue are outright communalism, religious fundamentalism and culture of hatred and violence. In the Scripture of all Semitic traditions the same God is described, yet some of the followers of these traditions support political violence in the name of religion. Similarly among the Indic traditions, the tension between the Brahminical Hinduism and Buddhism in the past is a point to be noted. According to Thomas Friedman, our fight is not to eradicate terrorism; our fight is to overcome the ideology of religious totalitarianism, with a different pluralistic ideology that will embrace diversity of religions, so that our faith could be nurtured without claiming exclusive truth.

Chapter IV: Inter-religious Dialogue: The Case for Semitic Religions.

The chapter deals with dialogue emphasising the three major Semitic religions. However, towards the end of the Chapter I do also deal briefly with Hinduism. The religions of the world can be broadly categorized into Semitic and non-Semitic religions. Non Semitic religions can further be divided into Aryan and non-Aryan religions. The word Semitic refers to the people who came from the Middle East, their religions originated among the Jews, Arabs, Assyrians, Phoenicians and many other tribes. However, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the main Semitic religions, also called Prophetic religions since they believe in Divine guidance sent through the prophets deputed by God.

Despite having so much that is common in the teachings of these religions, history gives evidence of numerous battles that have been fought over the centuries; sporadic wars and incidents of violence still continue. All these and the holocaust of Jews in the World War of the mid twentieth century are difficult to overcome, but a way has to be found to bring peace into this war-torn world. After the success of the Parliament of World Religions held in Chicago in 1893, Inter-religious dialogue has been found to be one effective method.

Over the last 60-65 years, Interreligious dialogue has been regarded as an important and integral part of human society in the globalised world. This led to the various interfaith commissions, international meetings, academic, humanitarian and spiritual movements aimed at creating greater understanding and co-operation between people of different faiths. In the present decades dialogues between Judaism and Islam, Christianity and Islam, Islam and Hinduism are urgently needed to counter the tension and misunderstanding which has been created by world events. Dialogue is living our faith in the presence of other faiths by reaching out to them in a spirit of openness and tolerance.

Interreligious dialogue refers to co-operative, constructive and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions, spiritual and humanistic beliefs at individual as well as institutional level. There is no place here for argument, attacking or disproving another point of view. The purpose is to learn the fundamentals of other religions and seek out what is common to them all. Much can be done for human society if we realise that all religions have a Divine figure at their core who insists on our loving and caring for others.

Comparative Theology has sometimes been associated with dialogue. In Comparative Theology, the scholar takes features that are common to two religions and lays them side

by side to study the different approaches to the same theme, thus it is allied to, but not the same as Inter-religious dialogue. Comparative theology may strengthen the persons who participate in inter-religious dialogue so that it is no longer superficial, since the participants are learned not only in their own tradition but also that of the others and the dialogues are immediate and concretely developed for success. Indeed, Interreligious dialogue can make good use of the findings of Comparative Theology to help find common features which definitely do exist. It is these that have to be built upon to construct the bridges so necessary in our violence driven world today.

The great differences between the various religions are not found in ethical principles or in mysticism but in religious dogma and the application to ethics. All the religions share the simple moralities and ethical motive. For example: keeping the Lord's Day, regular prayers, taboos against killing, robbing, adultery. All religions of the world must try to bring the religions closer to one another in their characteristic convictions and their speculative discourse about their convictions. Thus the world religions must start from the assumption that religion is a bridge to the infinite, no matter how roughly it might be built. Just as every language has its own significances, so does every religion.

Dogmatism or rationalising may be valuable in presupposition, and our reasoning can be infallible in its own conditions, but it is out of place in Inter-religious dialogue. The great and the major religions of the world are not based only on reason and experience but on apocalypse or revelation, history and the religious doctrines which are revealed to them that can't be known outside the divine-revelation, thus the divine-revelation narratives of religions can't be ignored by philosophy as fabrications. When there is inter-communication between the members of two unlike religious beliefs or ideologies, it is like two-way communication between two different personalities. Dialogue must contain the impression that neither side has a total appropriation of the truth of the subject but both require seeking further. After more or less extensive dialogue, the two sides should be able to agree on the subject discussed or at least respect the differences.

Globalization has led to an open market, free movement of people from one country to another and a mingling of different religious communities. Our response to them and their traditions is important to an understanding of the reality that surrounds us. Therefore the urgent necessity is to understand and to know other belief systems and culture. One has to be familiar with other religious practices, philosophical and theological doctrines. Today

we must learn to live with the neighbour, not merely in toleration but in peaceful and respectful relationship, which involves all- other denominations and religions.

For inter-religious dialogue to be effective, the participants must be allowed to make doctrinal claims. Participants may criticize abstemiously the doctrinal claims of other religions and defend their claims when criticized, such criticism and defence must be done in a respectful manner that improves the clarification of beliefs and practices while bringing better understanding of the similarities and difference between religions.

Chapter V: Conclusion: Towards a Pragmatic of Inter-religious Dialogue.

In 1990, Hans Kung, the Swiss Catholic theologian, initiated Weltethos. Project the proposition of Global Ethic, which is identified in his book Global Ethic and Global Responsibilities. His hypotheses with the theoretical phenomena and the book Global Ethic were named at the Declaration of the Parliament of World Religions issued in 1993. Global ethics doesn't mean a unified or universal concept or single religion that can overstep all existing religions of the world, but binds obligatory values and symmetric concepts on human motives and beliefs. He established this concept of a peaceful world; his principle is no peace between nations without peace among religions, no peace between religions without dialogue. On this basis in 1997, the Universal Ethics Project was established by UNESCO, which points out that global ethics has crossed the cultural barriers and demonstrates common ethical norms through dialogue, and also trying to solve human conflicts by pursuing the common features of different cultures. Global ethics is the code of conduct or principles, the theories that decide a person's moral values, expected by the group to which each individual belongs. Global ethics can also be said as the manual, the code of morals for the universal human being.

The actualities of the developing global neighbourhoods require a global ethics which applies equally to all those caught up in global affairs. Its efficacy will depend on the ability of people and administration to transcend narrow self-interests and agree that the interest of humanity will be served by acceptance of a set of human rights and responsibilities. The idea is that the values and principles of a global ethics should be the shared points of reference, providing ethical and moral guidance to the world.

However, the people of different faiths have historically and even today, resorted to violence at times to settle their conflicts. People use religions to justify their nonreligious

objectives for power or aggression, for self-defence many religions have a just war. The creation of a more peaceful world will require committed efforts over the long run to create conditions for peace. A global ethic espouses the view that individuals and nations are interdependent on each other, when a subset of a whole becomes defective and the defective portion is not treated quickly, the whole is likely to suffer. When society as a whole is healthy, the individual components are also healthy. A global ethic commits participants to respect life, dignity individuality and diversity with the aim to phase out bigotry. No dialogue will be successful without proper planning and discipline, thus it is significant to approach others with the same attitude however much they may appear otherwise to us, consider that all the religious traditions, have worthless adherents and embarrassing episodes in their history. Issues of separation should be dealt with as well as of unity; this should not be done with superiority or an effort to air grudges.

In spite of increasing the inter-religious dialogues, we see that religious tensions are increasing, thus what are our apprehensions of inter-religious dialogue and the limits? This requires rectification of the necessities and limitations of dialogues. It advocates caution on discourses about the issues of religious truth, reliability, pluralism, equitability of religions and so on. Inter-religious dialogue would perhaps have more success if not for the problems of inner discord and contradictions of theological and dogmatic perspectives. It offered a resolution in the model of reciprocal enrichment; this methodology of dialogue assures the promises of inter-religious dialogue.

It is our belief that the dialogue and encounters among universal religions will bring religious harmony, peace and understanding among them. Inter-religious dialogue would improve the oneness of humanity, faith in a religion that builds humanity. It gives many possibilities for encountering inter-religious dialogue and subsequently the people shall be more open to relate with other religions. Dialogue begins when people engage with each other and increases with mutual understanding. Inter-religious dialogue is the medium of human-divine relationship. It contributes to happy living together as communion of saints.

Each religious tradition has contributed an inspirational unique substance to the universe. Thus all the religious traditions are to be recognised and respected; no single tradition should assert that its tradition is the only way to liberation. The comprehensive way will yield democracy and freedom of adherence to the tradition one aims for. The true religion

dwells in the identification of Divine potentiality in the universal soul of humankind. The oneness of existence directs human beings beyond significant oneness of consciousness.

Religion becomes spiritual, when the adherences are benefited of liberty and obligation to justice and equality; there then appears spiritualism. When entire society is enjoying liberty then there is dynamic growth. This will be the true nature of human being, and their development and spiritualism for the 21st century. Today religion, global ethics and social justice is widely spoken of through inter-religious dialogue; the adherences need God who is beyond the religions and scientific progress but living amidst the poor.

Religions should be the way to attain the universal peace, harmony and co-existence, the violence and conflict is not because of various religious beliefs, but due to the religious fundamentalism. We must insist on mutual respect and love for the each other's religions. Religious freedom is the aim of inter-religious dialogue that sets to serve the human being; for such, new values should be introduced in our education system and the models of peace-building programmes should be introduced, thus justice and equality may be established.

III. Different Dimensions of Dialogues

a) Philosophical Bearings of Dialogue:

Martin Buber assigns dialogue as an important perspective in his theological system. His most authoritative work is *I and Thou.* He treasures and promotes dialogue not as purposeful attempt to reach a conclusion but the obligation or personal responsibility of authentic relationship between human beings and the creator. For him, true dialogues could lead human beings to openness, honesty and mutual commitment. The second Vatican Council lays primary emphasis on dialogue. The world, most of the Council's documents indicate a kind of dialogue with other religions *Nostra aetate*, dialogue with Christian denominations *Unitatis Reditegratio*, dialogue with modern society *Gaudium et spes* and dialogue with political leaders *Dignitatis Humanae.* With these thoughts Buber was greatly persuaded.

David Bohm was a physicist, who used dialogue in order to investigate human possibilities of thinking, communication and to encounter what are the social effects. The group consists of ten to thirty people who used to meet regularly for few days, Bohm's dialogue

left behind debate tactics to convince the participants, they spoke from their living experience on subjects that performed immediately. Where there is no word, and langue, there cannot be communication, no dialogue and no relationship with the human being. Thus they cannot exist among objects. Dialogic relation assumes language. Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educationist who wanted to develop a popular education system using advanced dialogue as pedagogy. Freire asserted that the students and the teachers learn dialogue and communication from one another in an ambience characterized by respect and equality; he encouraged the oppressed and linked this system to human values. Pedagogical dialogue was not only about deepening understanding but an attempt to shape a better world.

b) Integrated structured dialogue:

Structured dialogue is utilized for the complicated problems that include peace-making and indigenous community development as well as for social policy formulation. According to the European Union, dialogue is the means of mutual communication between governments and administrations that includes institutions and youngsters, thus the youngster's contribution towards the formulation of policies relevant to their lives.

c) The dialogue of theological exchange:

This is also known as discursive dialogue; Theological dialogue takes place at academic levels among the theologians, religious leaders and experts. Theological dialogue helps us to clarify issues, to build up healthier understanding away from prejudices and facilitates practical co-operation. The aim of this exchange is to clarify what each partner believes, to appreciate each other's spiritual values and have a better understanding of differences, which has helped to increase better appreciation and collaboration. Regrettably, much of the good has been undone because of polarization due to fanaticism, violence and socio-political agitation. More dialogue, not less, is needed to counter these negative trends. Thus these tips of dialogue enrich better understanding of one's own belief as well as that of others. The Semitic religious leaders give encouragement for universal peace and its proclamation.[3]

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[3] Paul Hedges, *Controversies in Inter-religious Dialogue and the Theology of Religions,* (London: SCM Press 1985), p. 60.

d) Dialogue of religious experience:

Here individuals or groups come together to communicate may be through the statement or by exercise, the terms used are *contemplative*, *spiritual*, or *mystical* practices, but it is also a form of inter-religious dialogue. This may involve praying together and conducting the dialogue of religious experience and perhaps asking questions about how their religious beliefs associate to each other. Thus the dialogue of theological exchange helps one to understand what others in fact believe, listening with respect and allowing them to express this in their own words. Together perceiving and responding with respect one can go forward to acknowledge authentic versions and build on distributed hopes and values.[4]

Religious experience requires a professional participant, since this involves interfaith prayers and Scriptural knowledge and ability to express one's own faith. Thus the participants should be well-versed in their spirituality and their religious texts and apply it in their dialogue. The experienced participant can create a Unitarian atmosphere, which can bring all participants on a common platform. One has to see that there is a real reason for this event to be conducted. It is quite difficult when something significant happens in the local community calling for prayer. In the absence of dialogue and communication among adherents of various religious faiths, there will be a vacuum, an abstract entity and incomprehension, easily filled by gossip, mistrust, prejudice, intolerance and racism; all this confusion has taken place because of ignorance, thus we can note that without dialogue extremism and hatred can grow. By educating the adherents of a particular world faith about their own religious beliefs rather than allowing them to trust in what is alleged, declared but not proved and is therefore prejudicial to society. In this sensible situation the prayer of St. Francis Assisi is well accepted by all and very often used in the meetings. During Interfaith prayer each participant listens respectfully to the prayers of the other faith.[5] Inter-religious gatherings accept the following prayer knows as St. Francis Assisi prayer as a common prayer for all!

St Francis Assisi Prayer:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace**,** Where there is hatred, let me
sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon, where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope, where there is darkness, light;

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[4] Ibid, pp. 61-62.
[5] Gerard Forde: *A Journey Together*, (Ireland: Wilton, Cork, 2013), p. 15.

And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek, to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.[6]

One who prefers the inter-religious/inter-faith prayer should know some guidelines and principles, respecting the belief of the others. Thus preparation should be done jointly with texts, words, symbols, actions and hymn or music, discussed and agreed upon. No dialogue venture will be successful without sensitive planning, preparation and respect. However they treasure their religious belief and exercises deeply, nevertheless every religious tradition, including our own, has unworthy adherents and unpleasantness in its account. True dialogue is not possible if only the better part of one tradition is contrasted with the worst of others. There should not be any attitude of superiority or effort to air grievances. It should include an awareness of our own contribution to division and misunderstanding. In dialogue one is not asked to compromise their faith, it should be mutual sharing.

e) Dialogue of common-action:

There are many world religions which do not place the same emphasis on faith as do some Western faiths. Likewise pluralist non-religious groups have hosted public reasoning dialogues to exceed all worldviews- Tran's belief dialogue. To some the term inter-religious dialogue and inter-faith dialogues have the same meaning; incomplete are the same as non-denominational Christianity. Thus the world council of Churches distinguishes between inter-faith and inter-religious: inter-religious refers to action between different Christian denominations, inter-faith refers to fundamental interaction within various faiths such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Semitic religions should work together to promote and preserve peace, liberty, social justice and moral values in the world. Judaism, Christianity and Islam place a strong emphasis on justice, peace and admiration for human dignity. They consider that human beings are stewards of God's creation, entrusted for the common concern for humanitarian values and also share in monotheism, belief in Prophets and the Holiness of Jerusalem Temple. Their collaboration in addressing social concerns based on these common

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[6] Ibid, pp. 14-15.

religious motives and values can build a better society to provide voluntary services and facilities. Social concern issues such as housing, drug abuse, street violence, unemployment, refugees and education are areas where Semitic religions can co-operate. To reach out to others and to understand them, to break down our own prejudices, to overcome the barriers, stereotypes, and suspicions that lie in us, requires perseverance; we will have to be patient to listen to and to accept the different world-views. On our own part, to live in peace as our faith demands this effort. [7]

f) The Dialogue of Life:

The human being lives in communities and in neighbourhood of each other and it is often hard to live together. Yet more effort is needed when religious and cultural differences exist. Thus we need to make an effort to reach out, to understand, break down our prejudices and to overcome the barriers, stereotypes and suspicions that are in us all. It is quite challenging, yet we need to be patient, perceive and accept the people of different religious faiths. Dialogue of life and dialogue of common action are spheres for which we need no expertise, where people are seen as central, thus it is the interaction between individuals on a personal level, and hence it is more significant.[8] What is necessary is willingness to interact with each other with respect and co-operation, because they have a direct impact on our daily lives. We have examples of Jews, Christians and Muslims living together in the now multicultural and multi- religious countries. The dialogue of life and Common Action can take place in formal and informal settings.

IV. Types of Dialogues

a) Personal dialogue:

Here each participant has a set of commitments as the acts of challenges are transmitted by the participants; statements are added or deleted from the commitment sets. The rule is that when a participant maintains a proposition, it goes into her/his commitment set.

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[7] Ibid. pp. 16-17
[8] Paul Hedges, Op. cit., pp. 60-61.

b) Information seeking dialogue:

The information to be communicated from one individual or organisation to the other is the goal of this dialogue; information circulating is apparently the primary goal of this dialogue, which would be help for the community development.

c) Advice solicitation dialogue*:*

The goal of one party is to seek advice, in order to carry out an act or solve a problem, by consulting another party who is in a special position to offer such advice

d) Expert consultation dialogue:

In order to solve doubts and be certain about the opinions with a course of action in an informed and intelligent manner, respondent has an obligation to offer his best advice in clear and approachable language. Thus the advice seeker asks a specific question that the expert can answer in relation to the problem.

e) Negotiation dialogue:

The aim of this dialogue is for both parties to make a deal while bargaining over some goods by admitting some things while insisting on other things. Each party tries to figure out what the other party feels is most important of the items at interest.

f) Deeper level of Dialogue:

This type of dialogue could be operating in three areas: a) Intellectual dialogue: there is a need to understand. i) Practical dialogue: we co-operate with others. ii) Spiritual dimensional dialogue: here partner's emotion and of life is experienced.

V. Disciplines for dialogue

There are basic rules on the basis on which dialogue takes place, although they may need modification according to time, place and circumstances.

a) Be Open:

Open oneself to one's partner to help growth in understanding and perception of the reality. Accordingly interpersonal movement starts and we may enter into meaningful

dialogue where we learn and change. It is a multi-sided enterprise because of the co-operative nature of community, learn and change oneself is the primary goal of dialogue.

b) Be Attentive:

Each participant has to take part fully in the dialogue; we have to acknowledge our partner, thus we learn more from our partner as he/she can learn from us, it is reciprocal, two-way action, giving and receiving.

c) Sincerity:

In dialogue one should come with an honest, trustworthy and sincere heart. Each participant should attempt to make it clear in what direction his community moves.

d) Mutual trust:

Dialogue among persons can be built only on personal and mutual trust. Hence it is wise not to tackle the most difficult problems at the outset. But start on some common ground, thereby establishing human rapport. And then gradually move from the known to the unknown.

e) No Prejudgement:

The assumption of dialogue is of agreement or disagreement, as far as possible to make an attempt to agree without violating one's own integrity; precisely that is where agreement ends and disagreement really begins.

f) Dynamic medium:

You along with your partner should define the meaning of dialogue, may be: it is a dynamic medium where each participant learns from the other, one may change and continually deepen, expand and modify himself as a Jew and Hispanic.[9]

g) Define yourself in Dialogue:

for example only a Jew can define what it means to be Jew, while the dialogue partner may contribute similar self-definition, since dialogue is dynamic communication and the

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[9] Leonard Swidler, "The Deep-Dialogue Decalogue: Ground rules for Personal and Communal Deep-Dialogue" *Sourcebook of the World's Religions*, (ed.), Joel Beversluis, (California: Novato, 2000), p. 140.

associates can learn from each other, one may change, deepen, expand and modify one's self-definition. Thus it is mandatory that each dialogue partner defines what it means to be an authentic member of his own tradition.

h) Equality:

Dialogue can take place where there is equality, thus all should remember we are equal. Where labour and management do not respect each other, or Muslims view Jews as inferior, there can be no dialogue. Deep dialogue requires and tends to produce an equal empowerment among partners; profound dialogue fosters a virtuous circle.

i) Be a self-Critic:

Without healthy self-criticism there can be no dialogue and indeed no integrity. Once we have shown seriousness in self-criticism, the partner will be open to a compassionate, critique of her/his position.

j) Pass over and return:

Experience your partner's community and tradition from within and return to your enrichment, traditions with heart, spirit and whole being, the depth of dialogue we need to pass over to our partner the Interior world and experience, it's emotional and symbolic impact and then return to our own, enlightened bearing something of the other's within us.[10]

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[10] Ibid, p. 141.

CHAPTER I

Religion and the Search for the Ultimate Reality

Introduction

According to the 2011 census, 79.9 percent of the population of India practices Hinduism and 14.2% adheres to Islam, while the remaining 6% adhere to other religions i.e., Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Baha'i faith and other groups. Here I will be discussing only the contemporary major religions in India with a view to explore the desirability as well as the plausibility of peaceful coexistence of Religions. In order to do that, we first need to understand the differences between these Religions as well as convergences. Thus, in what follows we elucidate the notion of reality according to each of these Religions in relation to the notion of God.

For some, Religion is a matter of personal happiness and a source of spiritual guidance. Others repudiate religion as a blind belief and dogma and thus they reject any reality to God. We have a variety of doctrines and practices amongst the followers of different religions and at times these may lead to conflicts. A philosophical search for the Ultimate Reality from religious perspectives would enable us to understand the different ways of construing the nature of Ultimate Reality in different world religions.

Human experience and reasoning though is limited, it could give us an awareness of a greater reality than the worldly reality, namely a universal, eternal and supreme power. By Ultimate Reality we mean to refer to the human aspirations towards eternity where the realm of the Divine or the sacred is vested.

For some thinkers, Ultimate Reality is a person who loves, a supreme being, who governs the universe while some others conceive the Ultimate Reality in an impersonal sense. Thus, all our definitions of Ultimate Reality and the way of thinking about it may be just different manifestations of the same reality, e.g., the Scripture of the Christians, *The Holy Bible* says:

> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light' and there was light...I have given every green plant for food.[1]

These words provide us an understanding of a higher and supreme authority over the Universe. This, according to the Semitic religions is the infinite God, the distinct response to prayers and manifestation of miracles. Thus the Ultimate Reality for Christianity and for the Semitic Religions in general, is the supreme, sovereign and fundamental power that is referred to as God.

Therefore what is real in an ultimate sense from a religious perspective is the state of the things believed to actually exist, which includes everything that is and has been and will be. The reality is often contrasted with what is imaginary, delusional in the mind or what is fictional. For a practitioner of faith, the real is distinct from the imaginary on account of his or her personal belief supported by the Scripture. And the Ultimate or Absolute Reality is thus Yahweh; the Almighty God; and Allah for the Semitic religions. Quite often the belief in such a notion of Reality arises from the human needs and a dissatisfaction with a life absorbed in the worldly matters. At times, it could arise from a fear of Death. And in many there is a spiritual yearning towards the Supreme Being or God. St. John, the evangelist writes: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."[2] In short, for the Semitic Religions, God is a Supreme Being who manifests to his chosen people and communicates the divine commandments and moral laws through the Scripture and the prophets and the chosen ones.

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[1] The Holy Bible: RSV, *Genesis* 1:1-30, (Bangalore: Collins Theological Publication, 1988), pp. 1-2.
[2] Ibid, *Revelation* 22: 13, p. 242.

I. Ultimate Reality in Hinduism:

> Then, in the beginning, there was neither nonbeing nor being (existence). Neither were there worlds, nor the sky, nor anything beyond...nor death, nor immortality was there, no knowing of night or day. That One (Ultimate) breathed by its own self-power, svadha, without air. All was concealed in darkness...That one became creative by self-power and warmth of contemplation. There arose love and desire, the prime seed of the mind... The gods appeared later than this original creative activity. Then, who knows wherefrom creation came into being? Who can know this truth? That One, who was supervising (the origins) from the highest heavens, indeed knows or knows not! [3]

Hinduism is a diverse system of thought and beliefs; its concept of God is complex and depends on each individual tradition and philosophy followed. Hindu philosophy does not take a restrictive view on the essential question of God and the universe. Hinduism as a religion has ancient roots in the Vedas. The Vedic pantheon consists of many gods and goddesses like Agni, Varuna, Vayu, Indra, Mitra and Prithvi among other deities. This religious practice is in harmony with the forces of Nature. Later Gods like Visnu, Siva and Brahma attained prominence in Hindu religious doctrines.[4]

The Vedanta philosophy construes the Ultimate Reality as Brahman, pervades the whole universe. According to Vedanta, Brahman is present in every person as the eternal spirit or soul which is called the *atman*. In the Monistic/pantheistic theology of Hinduism, the *Atman* is ultimately indistinct from Brahman the supreme spirit. Thus these schools are called non-dualist or *Advaita. Advaita* School holds that the goal of life is to realize that the Atman is identical to Brahman the supreme reality.

a) Advita Vedanta:

The scholarly opinion is that Jagad Guru Bhagwad Adi Shankaracharya was born in Ad 788 into a poor Brahmin family in Kaladi, Kerala, India. His father Shivaguru and mother Aryamba, childless for a long period, prayed in a Tiruccur temple to Lord Shiva and the lord blessed them with a son, whom they named Shankara, that is another name of Shiva.[5] His mother played a key role in teaching him Vedas and Upanishads, and Shankara displayed significant intelligence, proved a pious and

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[3] Quoted in T.K. Venkateswaran, "Hinduism: Wisdom from the Hindu Tradition", *Sourcebook of the World's Religions*, (ed.), Beversluis Joel, (California: New World Library, 2000), p. 51.

[4] Swami Dayanand Saraswati: *The Philosophy of Religion in India*, (Delhi: Bharatiya Kala Prakashan, 2005), p. 116.

[5] Pranab Bandyopadhyay, *Shankaracharya*, (Calcutta: United Writers, 1991), p. 17

spiritual person. At the age of sixteen he wrote his illustrious commentary on the Brahma Sutras. He was an unusual child during his age and amazed many with his knowledge, taking part in public debates with religious scholars, preaching and teaching to his disciples. His mother reluctantly gave in to his desire to become a follower of the sacred order of hermit, *Sannyasin*. Govinda Bhagavatpada was Shankara's guru, and was delighted by the young boy's explanation of Advaita *non dualism*, he could master most of the ancient scriptures at a speed that was amazing to his guru; he began writing his analytic thinking on Upanishads, Brahma Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita and he analysed *Gaudapadiya Karika*, *Brahmasutra*, Vedas and Upanishads. His doctrines were challenged by many philosophers, even facing opposition concerning his beliefs and Hinduism.[6] When Hindu culture was declining, Shankara drew attention to arced texts like Upanishads and Bhagvad Gita, re-valued the Brahma Sutras, propagated the message of Vedas, and revived Advaita.[7] Shankara died in 820 at the age of 32.

According to Shankara the Ultimate Reality is Atman or Brahman that is Consciousness of the pure Self, devoid of all attributes *nirguna* and all kinds of intellectual reason. Brahman related with its potentiality *Shakti,* Maya is the specified Brahman *saguna Brahman* or the *Ishvara* who is the creator, protector and destroyer of all that is there. Jiva or the personal self is a subject-object, its objective components are pure Consciousness that is called the *Saksin*. Its objective components are the inner organ addressed to the *antahkarana* that is *bhautika* that is framed with five components, with the prepotency of tejas that makes it invariably dynamic. The origin of the internal organ is Avidya that actuates personal identity. When a sense-organ comes in contact with an object, it presumes the pattern of that object. It is the mode or vrtti of internal organ which is inspired by the *Saksin* that takes the shape of empiric knowledge. In a waking mood the inner organs are assisted by the senses; in dreaming mood that operates by itself and in deep sleep it loses its cause Avidya. In this mood also individuality remains since the *Saksin* is related with

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[6] Victor George P, *Life and Teachings of Adi Sankaracarya,* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd, 2002), p.41.

[7] Prema Lata, *Mystic Saints of India: Shankaracharya,* (Delhi: Sumit Publications, 1982), p. 4.

Avidya. In liberation *Avidya* is destroyed by *Jnana* and the *Saksin* is recognized as the Brahman that always is.[8]

Maya/Avidya doesn't mean total illusion; it doesn't mean deficiency of knowledge, nor is it affirmative wrong knowledge, which is a cross of the real and the unreal, it is inexpressible. It is not real nor unreal, it is positive, has potentiality *Shakti*. If a shell is misidentified as silver, the component within the shell and the silver is not that of identity nor of variation is it known as non-variation. Likewise, Brahman is the base on which the universe appears through *Maya*. Once the right knowledge is drawn and the substantive unity of the jiva with the *Paramatman* is gained, *Maya/Avidya* vanishes.[9]

Advaita Vedanta could be summed by saying, *Brahman* is the only Reality, the universe is ultimately false and the individual soul is non-different from Brahman.[10] *Brahman* and *Atman* or the Supreme Self are substitutable words; the universe is a representation of *Maya*. *Avidya* thinks differently from *Brahman* and mistakes Brahman as this universe of plurality, yet as we misconceive a rope as a snake, *Avidya* disappears at the dawn of the supra-relation direct intuitive knowledge of the non-dual self that conveys liberation.

Brahman is the only absolute reality; it is beyond words and mind and it is inexpressible. The negative formula is the best description of it '*neti neti'* or 'not this, not this.' *Brahman* is the Supreme Self and his view is self-revelation as the background of all assertions and negations. The instant we bring Brahman between the concepts of intellect or make this ultimate subject an object of our concept, we escape its substantive nature, and then it doesn't remain unconditional. Consciousness becomes conditioned, the *Brahman* contemplated by *Maya*, is called *Ishvara* or God. *Ishvara* is the individual expression of the neutral *Brahman*. *Ishvara* is also acknowledged as *Apara* or lower *Brahman* as differentiated from the unconditional *Brahman* that is called *Para* or Higher *Brahman*.

The phenomenal attribute of *Ishvara* is rather obvious: He is the most prominent; only one who has understood his oneness with *Brahman* by rising higher speech and mind,

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[8] Chandradhar Sharma, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1987), p. 252.
[9] Ibid, p. 253.
[10] "Brahma satyam jagan mithya jivo brahmaiva naparah."

for the others *Ishavara* is all in all. *Brahman* can never be conceived by the finite mind; hence all those who talk about *Brahman* are talking about *Ishvara*. He ceases to be *Brahman* and assumes *Ishvara*. *Ishvara* is the *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, has perfect identity, called the Lord of Maya, immanent in the world that he restricts from within. He is the soul of the cosmos, the inner ruler, *Antaryamin*, the source of all. He is the Sustainer and Destroyer of the cosmos. He is the object of devotion, inspiration of moral life.[11]

Shankara, like Kant, conceives that God can't be considered through finite nature, Kant called this the antinomies. The cosmic proof can give just finite creation and a finite creator is no creator at all. The teleological proof can only point to the fact that a conscious principle is working at the root of creation. The ontological proof can only give the concept of God and not God as a real object. The Nyaya arguments to prove the existence of God are unproductive. *Shruti* is the proof for the existence of God. As Kant falls back on faith, so Shankara falls back on *Shruti*. There is no real creation, God, is not a 'real' Creator. God alone is real; the creation is only an appearance of God.[12]

Specified *Brahman* is *Ishvara*, phenomenally *jiva* and *Ishvara* have divergence, and the former is the agent and enjoyer, experiences pleasure and pain, whereas the latter is not touched by all this. While *Brahman* is awakened through the *Shruti*, he is not the body, senses and mind but is just the non-dual universal. By ignorance *jiva* is considered with the false notions of *I* and *mine* that come when mind through senses comes in contract with the fleeting concepts that is its reflection of that Consciousness as identical with mind and its states of ignorance. These concepts are demolished through correct knowledge, the outcome is liberation, and at last both bondage and liberation are phenomenal.

Just as the colorless sky is falsely imagined to be corrupted with dirt by the unknown, as a rope is incorrectly taken to be a snake, a shell is mistaken for silver, likewise the non-dual *Atman* or *Brahman* is fallaciously supposed to be the empirical self. Just as the Sun or the Moon seem to be many on account of the reflection in the various containers of water; similarly the same Self seems to be various phenomenal selves

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[11] Chandradhar Sharma, op. cit, p. 280.
[12] Ibid, p. 281

due to Ignorance. To Shankara there is pure self, Eternal and unchangeable, that is the brighter body of chaste Consciousness and that there is no other Reality, is the purpose of *Shariraka-Bhasya*.[13]

Atman is like *Brahman* the Pure Consciousness, self-luminous and transcending the subject-object duality, knowledge and the intellect. It is the Unqualified Absolute, merely Reality. *Brahman* is all and all is *Brahman*, no duality, no diversity, it is self-original, eternal existence is his quality. 'He who knows *Brahman* becomes *Brahman*.'[14] The *Brahman* himself is Pure Existence, pure Consciousness and Pure Bliss all in one.

The pattern '*neti neti*' is meant for expressing the fact that whatever can be presented as an object is finally unreal. The discussion of the whole field of objective nature points out that it is unreal thus to describe the Absolute, the negative method is the best and all these denials pre-suppose the positive *Brahman*.[15]Absolute can't be known as an object by the intellect. But being the only Reality, it is instantly recognized by spiritual occurrence. The phrase '*neti neti*' denies all characteristics of Brahman, but it doesn't deny *Brahman* itself. It means that there must be something ahead to Reality.[16]

b) Visista Advaita:

The *Visista Advaita* school of *Vedanta* philosophy was founded by Ramanuja. He was born in AD 1027, in Sriperumbudur and lost his father at a young age, after his initial general religious training he went for a course on Vedanta under Yadavaprakasa of Conjeevaram, where he disagreed with Yadava's explanation of Vedanta. Alavandar, head of the mutt at Srirangam, was impressed by Ramanuja's thinking and he thought of putting him in the apostolic seat at Srirangam. When Ramanuja went to his master, Alavandar, for his final blessing he was no more. There were three unfulfilled desires of the master, the chief of which was easy commentary on the *Brahma Sutra* which Ramanuja continued along with his devotional work at Conjeevaram. One day Ramanuja asked the priest of the temple the divine will of his future and he expressed it in the following verse:

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[13] *Shariraka-Bhasya*, I,3,19
[14] "Brahma veda Brahmaiva bhavati."
[15] *Brhadaranayaka-Bhasya*, II, 3,6
[16] Chandradhar Sharma, op. cit, p. 285.

> I am the supreme reality, my view is distinction. Self-surrender is the unfailing cause of salvation, individual effort not being essential, release will come in the end. Perianambi is the best of the teachers.[17]

According to Ramanuja renunciation is necessary for attaining the highest summits of human perfection near to God, he was more popular and was called the prince of ascetics (*yatiraja*), and he composed the great commentaries on the *Brahma Sutra* and the *Bhagavadgita* which became the commentary for the *Vaisnavas*. Ramanuja concentrates his attention on the relation of the world to God and says that God or the *Brahman* alone is real and independent but the souls of the world are also real, though their reality depends entirely on God, who is the highest reality, the supreme value, the only true beauty, perfection and free from all the imperfection. *Brahman* is the one who possesses the highest qualities; *Braham* is the only Lord of all.[18]

The philosophy of Ramanuja has been known as the *Visistadvaita.* He refutes the concept of Reality of *Advaitins* and *Dvaitins*, and the religion is known as *Vaisnavism* which is based on *Vedanta* and *Purana*. He establishes that *Brahman* or the Lord alone is Ultimate reality and he is the qualified Brahman, thus the Lord of all is *Brahman* because *Brahman* possesses the highest intensity of qualities, greatness is the essential nature of the *Brahman*.

On the other hand, the *Dvatin* insists on the eternal distinction and difference between *jiva* and Brahman. For pantheism all is God or God is all. *Visistadvaita* is different from all these systems as it states that God is nearer to all beings and is transcendent. The reality is one and that is *Brahman*, since by nature it is infinite, at the same time it changes the content of the finite self without destroying it. *Visistadvaita* is essentially a *Vedanta* philosophy of religion in which reason and faith coincide and become reasoned faith with the experience of non-dual Reality of qualified *Brahman*. The problem in the *Visistadvaita* philosophy is "what is that by knowing which everything is known." The answer is, 'It is *Brahman'*, Ramanuja realized the Ultimate truth i.e. *Narayana* and began to spread out the truth of the Ultimate reality for the benefit of humanity. Human thinking cannot be justified, the significant human feelings and deeper religious spirituality, can't be acceptable during our stress and

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[17] S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy,* Vol. II, *Second Edition,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 622.
[18] Ibid, pp. 616-617.

suffering. The absolute of Sankara, rigid, motionless and totally lacking influence, cannot call forth our worship. The absolute remains indifferent to the fear and life of its worshipper. Thus he declares that: "To save oneself is to lose oneself in the sea of the unknown."[19]

According to Ramanuja, God as the perfect personality possesses all qualities of being *sat*, consciousness *cit*, and bliss *ananda,*[20] has infinite knowledge; he has a Divine body and he is the creator, preserver and destroyer of this universe. Lakshmi is his consort; He is the symbol of power and mercy. He is called *Narayana* or *Vasudeva*. The God or the *Brahman* is not just the recognition of eternal truth and perfect beauty, but is full of love, which expands so that the human being has been created in his own image. Thus for Ramanuja there is an absolute self and every human reality is an expression of this self, the constituent elements of the whole world should have a common bond of unity and reciprocal relation, that is the spiritual principle which has religious experience of conservation of the finite, an admission of the infinite as a personal being. Thus for Ramanuja, God or *nirguna* Brahman cannot be known by perception, inference or scripture or any other means, for:

> If the sources of knowledge are all relative, they cannot tell us of something which transcends experience; if the scriptures are unreal, even so is the Brahman of which they relate. In the ultimate reality called God we have determination, limitation, difference, other-being which is at the same time dissolved, contained and gathered together in the One. Finitude is in the infinite itself. Brahman has internal difference (*svagatabheda*) and is a synthetic whole, with souls and matter as his moments (*cidacidvisista*).[21]

The knowledge of *Brahman* is immediate and is independent of the organs of sense; he knows and has direct intuition of all. *Brahman* is the supreme personality, he contains all experience within himself, and he is not dependent on anything. Thus the most eminent calibres of Brahman or Ultimate reality are knowledge, power and love. Out of love God has created the universe, made laws and given a helping hand to all those who seek to attain perfection, though each quality is different from others, yet they all belong to one identity and do not divide the integrity of being. Knowledge,

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[19] Ibid, p. 616
[20] Ibid, p. 638.
[21] Ibid, p. 638

power, and love are the superior abstract attributes of God, as different from matter and souls; *Isvara* is the support of his own essential calibres and those who depend on him, the Supreme has a divine form, not of the stuff of *prakrti* and not of karma, God does not suffer, he is not the cause of suffering, he is the Lord of karma, for the latter by itself cannot give rise to the effects, it is the supreme Lord that bestows the different forms of enjoyment in this and the heavenly world.

The *Brahman* has no form, thus doesn't enjoy physical pleasure or sufferings, neither is touched by the suffering of souls or the change of matter, all evil is the result of the past wrong, *samskara* is the product of the souls nor is God not at all responsible for the same. God lives in light, where nobody can darken his glory, the liberated souls can attend this life, but God will have much more than the liberated souls.[22] The individual souls are the attributes of God that create the part of His body, it is real eternal, has the spiritual light, beyond creation and destruction.

Ramanuja's God is conscious and the unconscious objects of the universe co-exist with God, yet their effect comes through him, the pluralistic universe is real as God is real. God is present throughout the whole universe; the universe depends on him, he is to be conceived as whole separated into the un-separated oneness of God. Thus for Ramanuja God is both transcendent and immanent, He is the totality of persons, there cannot be disorder with individual's thoughts and the objects of their thought, all is caused whereas *Brahman* alone is uncaused. *Brahman* is responsible for the world's imperfection; he is not touched by its imperfections. Ramanuja identifies the Supreme spirit with Visnu, and the highest degrees of attributes are ascribed to him. God's divine power is conceived through different ways. *Brahman* is the qualified unity or supreme reality, thus the whole universe is the attribute of *Brahma*, and God stands for the whole universe, and matter and souls form his body.

God is the Absolute unity in and through whole; the universe may appear as in creation and not appear as in *pralaya*. He is perceived through cause and effect, at the time of separation, God becomes a cause with mysterious matter and an un-represented soul forms His body. Thus the universe is hidden in him, during the creation subtle matter becomes gross and the un-represented souls become apparent. The formal state is the cause of *Brahman* whereas the latter is the effect of *Brahman*.

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[22] Ibid, p. 640.

Thus God is present throughout whole universe and the inner controller qualified substance who is the unmoved mover of the world process.

The soul and matter, within the unity of the Lord's essence, are the Supreme attribute as a whole; they are the *prakaras* or mode, whereas God is the supporter *prakari*, controller *niyanta* and the principal *sesi*[23] they are real subject to the control of the one *Brahman*. The relation of body and soul is the nature of dependence on God, when the soul departs, the body decays, thus the bodies are subject to the will of the soul, and it is the same relation to God. Through the *Isvara* he displays his boundless power of appearing diverse and multiple, inwardly he is the same, but his essence is to be distinguished from this *nityavihbuti*.[24] *Isvara* exists with the *jiva* as inner and the world as his outer body, the souls and matter are in most substances possessing the attributes with their distinct modes and activities.

The body and the soul have their own qualities. This assumption modifies Ramanuja's account of the interaction of the real and harmony to form the one universe under the supreme mind that joins many, the spiritual real. The soul, matter and God are three, have their natural differences yet they have one identity of the mode which is inseparable existence. Ramanuja provides proofs from the Vedas, that Brahman is full of well-disposed qualities, *Upanishad* says: "True knowledge and infinite is *Brahman*."[25] These terms refer to the Supreme reality and say that absolute *Brahman*, is permanent, perfect and possesses intelligence which is not contracted; whereas the intelligence of released souls were in contradictory condition. Since its nature is free from place, time and substance it is infinite *anantam*, the same characters are not true in the case of Souls called eternal *nitya*. Therefore it is first without second.

Ramanuja accepts that there are texts which deny all the predicates of Brahman but only deny finite and false attributes. The idea of *Brahman* is *vast*; we cannot comprehend the nature of Brahman, whereas the texts that deny plurality explain the real existence of things apart from the supreme spirit that is identical with all things.

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[23] Ibid, p. 640.
[24] Ibid, p.642.
[25] Ibid, p. 642

The *Upanishads* declare that: "One sees nothing else, hears nothing else, and understands nothing else-that is Infinite"[26] i.e. *Brahman*.

Ramanuja interprets, when a devotee reflects and realizes the intuition of *Brahman*, which consists of absolute bliss, he doesn't see anything apart from it, since the whole is contained within the essence, of external appearance of *Brahman*. Ramanuja expands the famous text, *Tat tvam asi* with his view of knowledge. Sankara's opinion is that the passage, *that art thou*, is aimed to bring the metaphysical identity among Brahman and individual souls. To understand and recognize S and P we must set aside thisness and thatness, then only S and P are identical and the sentence is affirming a contradiction and holds that every judgment is a synthesis of distinct elements.

The next *that art thou* means the absolute Brahman and individual soul. When Brahman and individual soul are in relation of subject and predicate *samanadhikaranya*[27] it defers the meaning of the Subjects and predicate. If the two meanings don't co-inhere in the same substance, the judgment fails. We distinguish subject and predicate through their meaning, so the text, *that art thou* brings the complex nature of the Ultimate, while inhering the individual souls in it. Brahman and *jiva* are the substance and attribute or soul and body because of their difference we can identify them, the scripture says, Indra's statements, *Meditate on me,* and Vamadeva's declaration, *I am Manu, I am Surya,* are interpreted by Ramanuja as affirming the view that *Brahman* is the inner self of all *sarvantaryami*. Since the infinite dwells in all, he may dwell in any individual and so one can say with *Prahlada* that as *Brahman* constitutes my every word, it directly or indirectly refers to *Brahman*.

Vaisnava theology is based on *Vedas*, *Agamas* and *Puraná.* The *Puranas* and the Prabandham communicates the infinity. *Puranas* inculcate the worship of the avatars i.e., Rama and Krishna. *Divya Prabandham* is devotional hymns addressed to the shrines' images of South India. Thus it is one Absolute identity with Visnu existing in five different modes, images and like incarnation, manifestations like *Samkarsana*, Vasudeva or the supreme spirit and the inner ruler of all *antaryamin*. The highest

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[26] Swami Nikhilananda (ed.), *The Principal Upanishads,* (New York: Dover Publications, 2003), p. 35
[27] S. Radhakrishnan, Op. cit., vol. II, p. 643

mode is *Narayana* or *Brahman* existence in *Vaikuntha*. Where God exists in body made of pure *sattva,* God in his infinite fullness transcends his own manifestations. God's perfect personality is not exhausted in its comical aspects. In *Vaikuntha*, the Lord is seated on the serpent *Sesa*, supported by *Laksmi*, she is the imaginative symbol of the creative energy of God, later in *Vaisnavism*, the divine mother of the universe, and she intercedes with God on behalf of weak and sinful human beings, united eternally with the Lord Brahman.

> Isvara symbolizes justice, Laksmi stands for mercy, and the two qualities are united in the godhead. Laksmi, the *sakti* of Visnu has the two form of *kriya* or the principle of regulation and control, and bhuti or the principle of becoming. These answering to force and matter, enable Visnu to become the efficient and the material causes of the universe. The Supreme has the six perfections of knowledge, energy, strength, lordship, vigour and brilliance. While the highest spirit Vasudeva possesses all the six perfections, the three other *vyuhas* possess only two of these.[28]

Vyuhas is the form that is the highest Brahman assumes out of tenderness for his devotees. They are the rulers of the individual souls, minds and ego. God in his infinity assumes various forms without his godly nature according to the time incarnate himself. Ramanuja's God is not an inseparable absolute who looks on us from the heaven and joins us in the encounters of our life and contributions our goals and works for the up-liftmen of the universe.

The avatars descend from the supernatural to the natural order. They are the principal (*mukhya*) or subordinate. When Visnu interferes with the natural order, we have a case of the former; the inspired souls are the subordinate incarnations. The freedom seeker worshipped the avatars, whereas the latter is resorted to by those who desire wealth, power and influence. God dwells in consecrated images *pratima*. The suffering which the Lord gives out of his love for men, he undergoes in permitting himself to be embodied in an idol. God dwells in all beings and attaches to the soul in all its wanderings through heaven and hell. The God in man is like a flash of lightning in the heart of a blue cloud. God as *antaryamin* is said to be the highest of all.[29]

Matter and the individual souls exist of their own, yet essentially they are not same as Brahman, he is eternally true or free from all imperfection. Matter is unconscious, and

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[28] Ibid., p. 644
[29] Ibid., p.645

the individual souls are subjects, in ignorance and suffering they all form a unity, since matter and souls have existence only as the body of Brahman. Apart from Brahman they are nothing, thus the undivided Soul are different from him, apart from him the individual soul cannot exist. Thus Ramanuja's theory is a form of advita or non-dualism, it admits plurality since the supreme spirit subsists in a plurality of forms as souls and matter; it is therefore called visistadvaita or qualified non-dualism.

c) Dvaita:

Madhva is the founder of the *dvaita* school of Vedanta. He was born in the year AD 1199, in the village Udipi, which is in the South Canara district. In his young age he was well-versed in Vedas and then he became a *sannyasin*. With several years of prayers and meditation, studies and discussion he developed his system of dualistic philosophy while in discussion with his teacher *Acyutapreksa*, an adherent of Sankara's school, and then he asserted the supremacy of Vishnu and he converted many to his faith from different parts of the country. He founded Krishna's temple in Udipi, and made it the centre for his followers. He died at the age of seventy nine. He wrote a commentary on the *Brahma-Sutra* and justified his work called *Anuvyakhyana*. He gave a commentary on the *Bhagavadgita* and the *Upanishads*, his summary of the Mahabharat is called *Bharatatatparanirnaya* and his commentary on the *Bhagavata-Purana* makes clear his philosophy. He wrote a commentary on the first forty hymns of the Rg-Veda and discussed many philosophical themes in his chapters.[30]

Dvaita is another developed system of *Vedas*; Madhva affirms the idea of permanent joy in his doctrine, to attain this permanent joy there are nine principles: i) Vishnu or Narayana is the supreme, he is absolutely independent and others are depending on Him. Madhva divides the real into two categories, a) Independent and b) Dependent. This system is called *Dvaita* or Dualism. ii) World contains souls and objects of various kinds; they are real and dependent upon lord Vishnu. iii) The world consists of five kinds of eternal differences which are essential; those are the basis of multiplicity and variety. iv) The selves are eternal and dependant on the supremacy of God. v) There are gradations among the selves, which are based on a) scriptural qualities possessed by them, b) The achievement of each self's fitness to reach to

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[30] Ibid.,p. 690.

moksha which is the final goal of life. vi) *Moksha* is the result from the realization of the true nature of oneself. vii) Salvation is absolute pure devotion to God, based on the intuitive knowledge of the supreme Lord. viii) The perception, inference and verbal testimonies are the only means of knowledge and ix) the supremacy of Vishnu, only the true scripture can reveal.[31]

Thus making his greatness known to the deserving selves attains moksha and the salvations bestowed by the merciful Vishnu. For Madhva the supremacy and independence of lord Vishnu is important but he didn't highlight the glory of the supreme lord Vishnu. Madhva's philosophical system consists of metaphysical, theistic and moral views; it is a theory of realities of supreme lord Vishnu, which has significant values, based on the intuitive knowledge of the great sages. It is non-dogmatic yet it admires the past. It is not radical, though it is rational and critical, his views satisfy the human personality, intellectual, religious, social and ethical as the western common belief tells men how they ought to live.

Madhva was a philosopher, teacher and head of Vaisnavism, which is significant branch of Hinduism, according to him some persons are better than others in dealing with religious matters and a way of life, and they are fit to give advice to others. Madhva's philosophy is a theory of reality consisting of detailed account of his ontology and epistemology. He called it '*Tatvavada*': Tatva means the real and Vada is the doctrine, thus it is called the doctrine of reality. Modern scholars called it dualism or pluralism, dualism holds that there are one or two independent realities and pluralism means there are many independent realities. Madhva doesn't hold either of them, Madhva believes that there is only one independent reality i.e., God and other realities are dependent on him. Lord Vishnu is *Tatva*, the supreme God and the core of Madhva's doctrine the *Tatvavada*. Madhva's philosophy is a theory of reality, put forward for consideration by all the thinkers that his metaphysics is much better than that of any other Indian philosophical school, where moral religious way of life is taught on the basis of the scriptural concepts of self, world, God, *moksa* and

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[31] B.H. Kotabagi, *A Modern Introduction to Madhva Philosophy,* (Manipal: Manipal University Press, 2012), pp.135-136

karma. He brings Vishnu as the personal God and supreme reality on which all other beings are dependent; he gave valuable contributions to these fields.[32]

Madhva classifies a thing with two real entities which differ in some details but agree in general characteristics of being from the spiritual point of view. The real is defined as that which is not superimposed, it is a negative definition of the real, that tells, what real is not, superimposed to the term unreal, this definition states that the real is neither illusory or unreal it is self-contradictory.[33] Thus Madhva the causes of illusion are: a) Basis, b) that which is superimposed on the basis, c) similarity between a) and b) and the role of unfavourable conditions of perception that may be physical, may be a defect of the sense organ, insufficient light/darkness and may be the distance between percipient and an object or anxiety to perceive something. For example when a rope is perceived as a snake, the rope is the basis a), superimposed b) is the snake which is illusory (false idea) there is similarity between the rope and snake in some respects. When we see a rope in the darkness, we wrongly perceive it as a snake and the existent rope becomes the non-existent object i.e., snake.

Thus for Madhva reality is absurd and the object may be real or unreal, he denies the *Advaitic* concept of reality and also denies *Advaitic* distinction between reality and existence, for him the existent object is temporary, finite, changing, or knowledge whereas root is transcendent eternal, infinite and permanent and it cannot be grasped by perception or knowledge, thus the real is studied by metaphysics, whereas existent by physics. Thus for him the real is the existent and the existent is the real these reality and existence mutually imply one another.

> The proposition 'X is real', where X stands for a physical object or a person, implies that 'X exists', and 'X exists' implies that 'X is real'. It follows that it is senseless to hold 'for real, it is impossible to exist'[34]

Thus according to Madhva, for the real, it is essential to exist, the difference between the real and the existent, like some other *Advaitic* difference between degrees of reality or the truth, it's quite absolute. Ignoring the *Advaitic* narrow sense of the real; Madhva admits the real can be independent or dependent, eternal or temporal,

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[32] Ibid, p. 137
[33] Ibid, p. 130.
[34] Ibid, pp. 139-140.

transcendent or spatio-temporal, permanent or changeable, perceptible or intelligible, infinite or finite, conscious or unconscious.

Thus Madhva recognised the existence of object in space or time and subject to various sorts of change is real, his concept of world is real. In another work real is defined as the object of correct cognition, this is an affirmative definition of the real and connected with the first definition of the real as non-superimposed, when we cognize an object as something other than itself then it is false, when it we cognize an object as it really is then only it is true. When we perceive a book as a book, we have true perception, but if we perceive a book as a small box, our perception is false, because the object of the false cognition is not real, we cannot say whatever is real is conscious or active. Thus for Madhva unconscious real i.e., material object and inactive they are also real. According to the Pragmatic real: for Madhva real is needed in our life, real as being objective has capability of existence when not perceived by us, could be perceived by many persons at the same or different times and places.[35]

Tatvasankhyana in the beginning is divided into two types: i) Independent and ii) Dependent. Here Vishnu is regarded as the supreme, *Svatantra*, the independent, whereas all other real are dependent, their nature and existence is dependent on the higher God, i.e., Vishnu, since he is the only real independent, the supreme, sovereign, the inner ruler of everything, all that happens and exists depends on him. Thus for Madhva if he does not exist, nothing could have existed but he can exist even when there is nothing. During the *mahapralaya* deluge everything was destroyed, but he alone existed along with his consort *Laksmi*.

The purpose of Madhva's divide of real into metaphysical and spiritual is: i) to know the truth and ii) to know a) independent supreme God, b) dedicate to the supreme God, c) get the knowledge of supreme God and d) ultimately attain *moksa.* According to the Indian philosophers, there are many divisions of real: i) distinguished into substance, attributes; relations, activity, generality, particularity, inherence, ii) real is distinguished into finite and infinite. In this way the uniqueness of God is not clearly conveyed. According to the first division, God is substance, means God includes the substance amongst the many, and the class of infinite beings contains God and other infinite beings.

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[35] Ibid, p. 141.

According to Madhva, Vishnu is not one independent real among other independent real's, but there is no independent being other than the Supreme Being that is God Vishnu. Here Madhva stresses the God's uniqueness and greatness since for him the true, pure and everlastingness of God is dependent upon our knowledge of his boundless glory and our dependence on him.

The dependent category is further divided into: i) positive, that is known immediately, ii) negative, doesn't exist. There are three kinds of negation: a) antecedent negation, it is absence of a thing before it is produced, b) subsequence negation, it is absence of an object; it has beginning but no end. c) Absolute negation, it is non-existence at all times and places, e.g. lotus in the sky or a square circle, it doesn't exist at any time and place. For some thinkers there is another *Anyonyabhava*[36] the mutual negation, e.g., a table is not chair and the chair is not table, but for Madhva it is difference, not negation. Thus the concept of difference has an important role in Madhva's philosophy therefore the negation is necessary.

The positive category is classified into: a) conscious and b) unconscious, only the conscious beings are aware of moral and spiritual values. The conscious beings are classified into: i) free from the pain and ii) affected by pain. Vishnu is independent conscious thus he is free from all pain, god Rama is dependent conscious, he is in company of the lord Visnu, thus he is always free from the bondage of pain, he is described as *Nityamukta*.[37] There are two forms of conscious dependent beings affected by pain: i) free from misery, and ii) still in pain and bondage, they are two parts, a) fit to be liberated and b) unfit for the liberation. Those who are worthy to be liberated e.g. are: other gods, goddess, sages, kings and the best human beings, whereas those who are unfit for the liberation and deserve hell are demons, monsters, ghosts, etc. They will remain there forever in Samsara, in the bondage. They are born and die again and again; they experience pleasure or pain, happiness or sorrow which is the result of their good or bad deeds.

Madhva admits the concept of eternal punishment, and also all consequences that follow from the principles of his system and his eternal penalty is an effect of his view that selves are, by their nature, immutable and different from one another. The

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[36] Ibid, p. 143
[37] Ibid, p. 145

unconscious dependent real is classified into three kinds: i) eternal, ii) un-eternal and iii) eternal non-eternal, and the Vedas, the alphabetical fifty-one *Varnas* and *Avyakrtakasa*, the uncreated space, belong to the eternal category. The *Vedas* are *Apauruseya*[38] impersonal; they are not the work of human beings or of divine. *Vedas* exist in lord Vishnu's mind, they are known to lord Vishnu, since he is eternal, *Vedas* are eternal, and at the time of creation God repeats them in the same order. For Madhva Space and time are real, also in the ontological sense of separate existence from things and events that occupy them. He accepts the absolute theory of space and time which gives the existence of things and occurrence of events in them; they are like huge containers of things and events, they exist even when they are empty like an empty box exists.

> Space and time are nothing more than sets of spatial and temporal characteristics and relations among things and events. So, if there were not things and events for the relations to hold, there would not or could not be absolute or empty space and time.[39]

Thus space and time cannot exist absolutely and independently without their relations of the objects that appear within them to the adverse, space is just the arrangement of things that co-exist and time that the arrangement of those that attain one another. According to Madhva these object should be absolute and super-sensuous, intuited by the absolute certain knowledge and the idea of *Mahapralaya* of absolute space and time.

Madhva asserts that space and time are infinitely divisible, eternal and uncreated. According to Vedanta, all things of the universe are the creation of Brahma the God. For Madhva, God is omniscient, space, time and eternal bodies are the creation of God, thus the space and time may be not uncreated and the assertion of Vedanta that god is the creator of everything. Madhva's scriptural assertion is absolutely true, and he comes out with the term, 'creation' by recognizing created space and time. The term creation means that non-existent things come into existence. According to Madhva they are created means they are dependent on God for their existence, if he wants he can destroy them and re-create them, but his desire is not so, ultimately they

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[38] Ibid, p. 146.
[39] Ibid, p. 148

are dependent on the supreme God. This type of creation is called *Paradhinavisesapti*.[40]

Creation brings change; Madhva says there are two kinds of change, i) partial change, and ii) total change. In the partial change the original nature of the thing remains the same whereas some of the qualities, relations, utilities etc., are changed, e.g., raw mango become ripe, the green colour is changed into yellow, the sour taste into sweet. There is the change yet the thing remains the same and is called by the same name. In the case of total change, the composition, form, qualities and utilities of the object are changed, the object regarded as the same and new, and a new name is given to it, this sort of thing will happen when the non-existent things becomes existent as a new object, e.g., cotton changed into a piece of cloth, the cotton remains into the cloth, whereas the latter is not called cotton because the cotton has become a cloth, has changed its form, composition, quality and utility to a great extent, thus it is not called cotton but a piece of cloth is the new object made of cotton. Also a lump of clay make into a pot has gone under many changes in its composition, form, quality and utility, being a pot as a new object but not the clay, though clay is in it. This kind of total change in which non-existent thing comes into existence that is regarded as creation only the only exception being space and time.

Madhva came with new name, *Paradhinaviseapti*, which means something that assumes new characteristic that depends on the will of God; an eternal substance comes to have a change in its character as willed by God. Thus the existence of all eternal and non-eternal changes depends on the will of God. He can demolish and re-create a new according to his wishes. Thus God is independent and the universe is depending on him.[41] The eternal real remains the same and called by the same name i.e., space, time and self is been called by the same name. Through the concept of *Paradhinavisesapti* there are differences, between eternity, independence and permanence, for some these concept could be together, thus what is eternal must be undermined and hence independent and unchangeable, for them eternal has no beginning nor end, can neither be produced nor destroyed, the eternal will remain the same forever, but Madhva denies these arguments, for him the eternal may be

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[40] B.N. Krishnamurti Sharma, *Philosophy of Sri Madhvacarya*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2014), p. 114.

[41] B H Kotabagi, Op. cit., pp. 152-153.

determined, dependent and subject to change. Therefore he says that the space, time, souls, although they are eternal, yet they are determined by God and they are subject to change that is called *Paradhinavisesapti*.[42]

Madhva accepts two statements i) God is the creator of universe, and ii) there are eternal substance. He says that *Bhutakasa*, is another kind of space that is the product of matter that occupies uncreated non-eternal space. Similarly for Madhva time has two aspects: a) eternal, it exists from eternal to eternal, it is called Mahakala; ii) non eternal, it has neither beginning nor an end. According to Madhva the material universe has evolved from the primordial matter called *Prakrti*. Evolution is in the process of actualization of what is potentially present in the original stuff. Thus in the process of evolution the material world that is potentially present in the *Prakrti* becomes actual. Similarly, what is potentially present in the selves becomes actual. This is in harmony with the theory of causation, according to which the cause and effect are neither completely different nor are they fully identical.

Madhva calls the evolution theory as *Parinamavada,* after twenty three evolutes have developed out of the primordial subtle *Prakrti,* it consists of three *Gunas*, the components called *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas,* are the sources of energy. When these components of *Prakrti* are in balance the evolution does not take place, but when the components are disturbed, the process of evolution begins. The *Prakrti* (original matter) and the *Gunas* (attributes) of Satvas, Rajas and Tamas the principle sources of energy, are behind the evolutionary process.

When the infinite lord willed to create, Sri Laksmi the presiding deity over *Prakrti,* she is also called *Cetanaprakrti,* the conscious; in distinction from *Jadaprakrti* the material is stimulated and the original proportion between the *Gunas* is interrupted, as a result one *Guna* tries to preponderate over, and evolution consists in different proportions of *Gunas* being developed. Thus the evolution is a process of making manifest what is potential in *Prakrti*.[43] Even at the time of *Mahapralaya Prakrti* remains active, when there is no evolution, *Prakrti* is active. Giving rise to similar constituents i.e., *Satva* modifying into *Satva*, Rajas into Rajas, and *Tamas* into *Tamas* in the same original proportions. According to the *Upanishad*, *Moksha* or liberation is

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[42] B.N. Krishnamurti Sharma, Op. cit., p. 223.

[43] Ibid, p. 157

knowledge and experience of oneness with the creator; there Ataman's isolation no longer exists, but it is not mere nothing or death. As the *Manduka Upanishad* says:

> As the flowing rivers disappear in the sea, losing their name and form, thus a wise man, freed from name and form, goes to the divine person who is beyond all.[44]

With the Moksha, individual self attains perfection in the ultimate Reality, It is a state of ultimate bliss or *ananda* as conceived by many schools of Indian philosophy, though some understands this state as beyond any pleasure or pain.

It is believed that Vedas are the Hindu revealed scripture, they are the basis of many Indian philosophical schools, and all the *Vedanta* schools claim that they are drawn from the doctrines of *Vedas*, especially from the *Upanishads*, also known as *Vedanta*. Sankara's thoughts are similar in some respects to those of the Western philosopher Hegel. Both of them accept absolute idealism, but they have some important differences in their concept of absolute reality and the world. Madhva's philosophy has several characteristics in common with Ramanuja's idea of reality. Madhva stands for unqualified dualism and asserts five differences between God and the individual soul, God and matter, the individual soul and matter, one soul and another, and one part of matter and another. There is some element of missionary fervour in Madhva's faith which suggests the influence of Christianity, for which we have some evidence.

The schools of *Vedanta* and *Nyaya* state that karma itself proves the existence of God. *Nyaya* make the logical inference that the universe is an effect and it ought to have a creator, a supreme being. Dualistic schools *Dvaita/Bhakti* understand *Brahman* as a supreme being who possesses personality; they worship him/her as *Vishnu, Brahma*, Shiva or *Shakti. Mimamsakas*, identify Brahman and *Ishvara* as one as in Advaita. For *Vaishnavism*, he is Vishnu, God, and the Vaishnava scriptures identify Rama and Krishna popular deities of contemporary Hinduism. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, God is the sole repository of *Gunas*/attributes and those attributes are imperishable, his hands and feet are everywhere and all around his eyes, ears and face point to all directions and all the three worlds are surrounded by these.

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[44] Quoted in Rene Dubos, *So Human an Animal; How we are Shaped by Surroundings and Events*, (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 1998), p. 117.

However, some of the dualistic systems like the Classical *Samkhya* or pluralistic system of *Vaisesika* do not believe in the existence of God. Classical samkhya argues that an unchanging God cannot be the source of an ever changing world. Thus, for them the ultimate reality consists in *Avyakta*, the un-manifested *prakrti* along with the *Purusa*. However, later *Samkhya* has accepted the existence of God and we see the *Samkhya* system as espoused in *Bhāgavat Purāṇa* explicitly arguing for the existence of God as *Narayana*[45] as the direct cause of manifestation of *avyakta* into various evolutes of *prakrti*. The *Vaisesika Sutra* also doesn't mention God.[46] Thus, in short, we may say that with regard to God as the Ultimate Reality, different systems of Indian philosophy hold different views.

Be that as it may, philosophical differences are perennial topic for dialogue and debates amongst philosophers. However, even at the terrain of everyday life and belief systems, the nation harbours diverse cultural moorings and rituals. Though, Hinduism was not recognized by any name or title, the religion we know today as Hinduism was more a cultural lifestyle of the people of the native place. Sri Aurobindo writes:

> The religious culture which now goes by the name of Hinduism …gave itself no name, because it set itself no sectarian limits; it claimed no universal adhesion, asserted no sole infallible dogma, set up no single narrow path or gate of salvation; it was less a creed or cult than a continuously enlarging tradition of the Godward endeavour of the human spirit. An immense many-sided and many-staged provision for a spiritual self-building and self-finding, it had some right to speak of itself by the only name it knew, the eternal religion, *Sanatana Dharma…*[47]

The word *Hinduism* is not originally Indian but came into use by the ancient Persians, who, while referring to the river *Sindhu* pronounced the word *Sindhu* as Hindu. The Arabs referred to it as *al-Hind*, thus the people of the land around the river came to be known as *Hindu* and their land *Hindustan* and their religion *Hinduism*.

> Though *Hinduism* is popularly known by that name, the traditional Hindus prefer to call it *Sanatana Dharma* that is eternal religion flowing from time immemorial. They also regard it by its original

[45] Peter Charles Basel, *The Samkhya System of the Bhagavata Purana*, (USA: Iowa University,   2012), p. 27.

[46] Johannes Bronkhorst*: God's Arrival in the Vaiśeṣika System*, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (June 1996), p. 281

[47] Aurobindo Ghose, *India's Rebirth*, (Paris: Institute De Recherché Evaluative, 1997), p. 145

name ... *Vaidika Dharma*, for it is rooted in the Vedas. It is also called *Arya Dharma*. *Arya*, means great or noble. . .[48]

Although Hinduism, the religion of the Hindus, is the one of the oldest religions of the world, yet its original root and the founder is not known. Hinduism represents neither a dogma nor a collection of some beliefs, it is a living religion, and it denotes a way of life and also a way of thinking.

Hinduism consists of several streams of beliefs, practices and socio-religious institutions which pervade every aspect of Hindu life. This makes Hinduism very complex since it is not based on the preaching and thought of any single sage or prophet, there is no single sacred scripture, no single authority to control, regulate, and guide the lives of the faithful.[49] The whole culture includes the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and Yoga. In Hinduism, *Brahma* is the creator, Shiva is the destroyer and Vishnu is the one that sustains the whole of existence. Hinduism believes in reincarnation and believes in *Karma* that is the force that determines the quality of life.

II. Ultimate Reality in Jainism:

> Know other creatures' love for life, for they are like you.
> Kill them not; save their life from fear and enmity.
> All creatures desire to live, not die. Hence to kill is to sin.
> A godly man does not kill. Therefore, kill not yourself, consciously or unconsciously. Living organisms which move or move not, nor cause slaughter of them. He, who looketh on the creatures of the earth, big and small, as his own self, comprehendeth this immense world. Among the careless, he who restraineth self is enlightened.[50]

Jina means a *spiritual victor*, a conqueror, has conquered his passions, desires and karmas and obtained liberation. Jainism means a follower of a *Jina*, the great spiritual leader namely *Vardhamana Mahavira*, the last of the *tirthamkaras* who gave a new direction to the faith. The tradition believed that the teachings of Jainism are eternal[51]. Jainism is not named after any one particular seer unlike Buddhism or Christianity. It is rather derived from the root word *jin* that means a *spiritual victor*. There are many

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[48] C.N. Shankar Rao, *Sociology of Indian Society,* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company, Revised Edition 2012), p. 8

[49] Ibid, p. 8.

[50] Salgia T. Amar, "Jainism", *Sourcebook of the World's Religions*, (ed.), Beversluis Joel, (California: New World Library, 2000), p. 82.

[51] K. L. Padmadas, *Indian Philosophy: Non Vedic Schools II*, (Kerala: Calicut University, Department of Sanskrit Sahitya, 2014), p. 7.

other equivalent names for Jainism, for example *Rsabha*-cult, *the cult of Rsabhadeva, the first Tirthankara*, Ahimsa-Dharma -*the cult of non-violence*, Sramana -*Mendicant, Yoga-Marg -Path of yoga, Vratya, Arhat, Niragantha, Syadvada -Anekanta Mata, Saman, Bhavya, Saraka, Shravaka*, etc., but the term Jain is the most important, as it means a follower of Jina.[52]

Though it is difficult to assign a date to the origin of Jainism, it is a historical fact that Jainism is older than *Mahavira.* In fact Jains claim that Jainism is the eternal religion and in every era it has been revealed by 24 *Tirthankaras* of whom *Rsabha Deva* is the first and *Mahavira* the last of the present age, who has reinterpreted moral and religious principles when human beings were living unrighteous lives. Thus *Mahavira* was not the founder of Jainism but the last *Tirthankara*, and it is historical fact that Jainism is older than *Mahavira,* who could be considered reformer and was responsible revitalizing certain religious principles when the human being were living the evil path. Jainism is basically a transtheistic religion of ancient India; it is the continuation of the ancient *Sramana* practice which existed with the Vedic tradition from ancient times. Jainism has its own specific practice and way of life; it imposes a path of non-violence towards all living beings. The teachings and practice is on the self-effort to progress up the spiritual ladder to divine consciousness, and the soul that conquers its own inner enemies is the Supreme Being called *Jina*.[53]

However, although Jainism has no founder, the present age could be traced back to Mahavira, a teacher of the sixth century BCE, contemporary of the Buddha. Like Buddha, Mahavira's doctrines were formulated as a reaction to and rejection of Brahmanism, the Vedas and the Upanishads then taking shape.[54] Jainism and Buddhism, along with a school of materialists called *Carvaka*, were regarded as the unorthodox *darsanas*, and they taught that the Vedas and Upanishads had no authority. The ascetic *Skandak* asked Lord Mahavir,

> Is the universe with end? Is the universe without end? Mahavir gave
> the reply; I conceive the universe in four ways as substance, space,
> time and modes.[55]

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[52] Ramjee Singh, *Jainism in The New Millennium*, (United Kingdom: Commonwealth Publication, 2010), p. 1-2.

[53] Ratan Singh, *Jainism Philosophy and Culture*, (New Delhi: Global Publication, 2011), pp. 1-2.

[54] K.L. Padmadas, Op. cit, p. 7.

[55] Chaitanya Prajya, *Scientific Vision of Lord Mahavira*: *A Philosophical and Scientific Study of the Jain Canonical Text Bhagavati Sutra*, (Ladnun, Jain Vishva Bharati, 2005), p. 26.

Thus the Lord clarified each one in the following manner: i) substance; the world is a unitary entity with end, ii) Space: ultimately the space has end, iii) Time: it will be eternal, fixed, without end and iv) Modes: since the world has different modes of colour, smell, taste, touch, configuration, heaviness, lightness, and so on, in this sense the universe is without end.

According to Jainism space is infinite in all directions, yet not all of space is inhabitable. Since it is space which is pervaded with dharma, the world resides in space and the rest of the inhabitable universe may contain gods or spirits. It is an atheistic and dualistic religion i.e., matter and souls are the substance, and the universe is controlled by a Supreme Being whom we call god and there is no being outside it with control over it. The gods and the supreme beings are all subject to karma and rebirth. By the human actions, souls accumulate karma, which draws them back into a body after death. Thus all the born souls have undergone infinite number of previous lives and yet going on. And all those who win release from the bondage of *karma* will continue to reincarnate, each new human being would be taking birth and shape according to the amount of karma accumulated.

Jainism believes that all living beings have a soul, which is potentially divine with innate qualities of infinite knowledge. Thus we should respect living beings. Every soul is born according to its own *karmas*, and when the soul is freed from karmas it attains divine consciousness. Every soul is the designer of its own life on earth and in the hereafter. The triple gems-right faith, right knowledge and right conduct show the realization. Non-violence is the foundation of right conduct; this includes forgiveness.

Navakar Mantra is the fundamental prayer in Jainism, recited at any time of the day, indicating the devotee's respect to liberated souls still in human form, by saluting them as *namo namaha*. The mantra reminds followers of the ultimate goal of reaching nirvana or moksha. The means to attain this goal include the following precepts: Be in the company of holy, qualified and afflicted souls, tolerate the wicked; control possession and lead pure life that is effective to you as well as others. Conviction in non-violence and practicing it in our daily life are difficult for a soul to attain, hence human beings should strive for spiritual evolution rather than succumbing to the temptations of evil doing. *Jinas, Arihants and Tirthankars* have conquered the inner passions and attained divine consciousness. Jains worship their icons, and study the

scriptures of liberated beings. The aim of Jainism is liberation of the soul from the negative effects of un-enlightened thoughts, speech and action. It is achieved through human conduct and through clearance of *karmic* obstructions by following the triple gems of Jainism.[56]

Mahavir was the last sage or the *Tirthankar* of Jainism; he came with a new concept of all living beings. According to Mahavira there is no ultimate reality but there is a soul in all living beings; as we grow from birth to old age, the soul evolves as we grow; the soul is impressed by the environment. For them soul is in everything from atoms to humans and based on its capacity it grows to a different level. Their belief is in unseen souls i.e., bacteria and virus, for them the animal's soul is higher than in vegetable life, and human souls are at the highest level of consciousness; killing or harm of animals is prohibited in Jainism.

Anekantavada and *Sapta Bhanginaya*:

Anekantavada or the doctrine of manyness of reality gives Jain philosophy a realistic and pluralistic perspective. Matter (*pudgala)* and spirit (*jiva)* are separate and independent realities. There are countless material atoms and each individual soul possesses countless aspects and features of its own. Every object possesses countless positive and negative characters, thus only the infinite being knows all aspects of a thing, and the human being can know only some characters of some things. A thing that exists independently and has many characters is called substance. It persists in and through all attributes and modes, thus substance is defined as that which possesses qualities and modes. Among these qualities of substances some are permanent and essential, while others are changing and inseparable attributes, because the latter are the permanent essence of the substance and cannot remain without it. The modes are changing and accidental reality, *Brahmanism* emphasizes the one, the permanent, the real. Early Buddhism emphasizes the many changing, the unreal. Jainism points out that they are the two sides of the same thing. Substance essence is permanent but has its changing modes thus it is subject to origination and decay.

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[56] Ratan Singh, *Jainism: Philosophy and Culture*, (New Delhi: Global Publication, 2011), p. 2-3.

According to the Jainism all the partial views are called *Anekantavada*. According to the Jains all knowledge short of omniscience is flawed. Because reality is characterized by change and decay, as opposed to simple permanence for the Hindus and impermanence for the Buddhists, the Jains developed an epistemological system based on seven perspectives *(naya)*, this system is *anekantavada*.

The theory of *Syadvada*, and *anekantanvada* or knowledge and judgment, are two aspects of the same teaching, realistic and relativistic pluralism. For example, if we know that it is a coin which has head on one side and tail on the other side; we also know that it must turn up either head or tail when we throw it up in the air. Thus the metaphysical reality that has innumerable characters is known as *Anekantavada* or *Sapta-Bhanginaya*; whereas, epistemologically and logically, we may know only some aspects of reality and our judgments are relative, it is known as *Syadvada*.

The term *syad* has been translated as may be, which doesn't bring full implications. Certain logical ideas of the Jains are called *syadvada* which has close relevance to the concepts of probability. But it is quite difficult to endorse the exact meaning of logical and philosophical expressions in making judgments which were current almost 2500 years ago. Thus we must know our judgments are true only partially and may not be regarded as absolutely true in terms.[57]

Samantabhadra gives the entire account of the seven parts of *Syadvada* or *Saptabhaginaya* in his *Aptamimamsa*, which were well formulated in the mediaeval period of Indian logic. The well-known seven parts of *syadvada* or *Saptabhaginaya* or the seven fold predication which is the most original contribution of Jain logic to Indian thought. It holds that there are seven different ways of speaking of things or its attributes, they are i) is, ii) is not, iii) is and is not, iv) is un-predicable, v) is and is un-predicable, vi) is not and it is un-predicable, and vii) is, is not and is un-predicable.

i) Is, *Syad asti;* from the point of view of its own material, place, time and nature, a thing is, that exists as itself, the jar exists as made of clay, the room of particular shape and size. ii) Is not, *syad-nasti*; From the point of view, a thing is not, the jar does not exist as made of metal, at a different place, time, of a different shape and size. iii) Is and is not, *syad-asti*; it may be said that a thing is and is not, that certainly

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[57] C.N. Shankar Rao, Op. Cit, p. 6.

the jar exists and does not exists, thus what a thing is as well as what it is not. iv) Is un-predicable, *syad-avaktavya*: in this sense a thing is un-predicable, while the presence of its own nature and absence of other nature are both together in the jar, still we cannot express them. v) Is and is un-predicable, *sydd-asti-avaktavya*; we note here both the existence of a thing and it's inexpressible.vi) Is not and is un-predicable, *syad nasti-avaktavya*; we note here what a thing is not as well as its indescribability. vii) Is, is not and is un-predicable, *syad asti nasti avaktavya*; we bring out the inexpressibility of a thing as well as what it is and what it is not.[58]

Thus above mentioned seven paths of speaking things or attributes, of which first two are primary, affirmative that a thing is in its own from, *svarupa*, its own matter, place and time. The letter is the negative fact, thus this doctrine insists on the correlatively of affirmation and negation. Therefore all their judgments are double-edged in character, thus all things are real or not real, and a thing is and is not. In this view there is a negation has the positive basis, for example sky-flower possess a positive basis in the real sky and flower, though their combination is not real, but it expresses the meaningful truth that differentiate the concept. The thing has nothing from which it can be differentiate is impossible.[59]

In Jain knowledge there are four modes of perception: i) observation ii) recognition iii) determination and iv) impression. These four modes lead to subjective cognition. The first five kinds of knowledge *(jnana)* and the second kind *(shrutajnana)* derive from the Jain scriptures and general information, both are mediate cognition, based on external conditions perceived by the senses, in addition to that three kinds of immediate knowledge i.e., i) *Avadhi (supersensory perception)* ii) Manahparyaya *(reading the thoughts of others)*, and iii) *Kevala (omniscience). Kevala* is direct experience of the soul's pure form unblemished by attachment to matter. It is omniscience unlimited by space, time and object, the first attribute of a liberated *jiva*, is the highest level of purity because it is perfect knowledge comprehends all substances and their modifications.[60]

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[58] S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy, Volume I,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, India, 2008), p., 250-251.
[59] Ibid, Cf., p. 251-252.
[60] Ibid, Cf., p. 244.

Thus the liberated soul as a *Tirthankara* is called a *kevalin (possessor of omniscience)*. To become a *Tirthankara* requires the development of a particular type of karmic destiny. All *Tirthankaras* are not called *kevalins*. For Jainism yoga is the physical and meditative discipline of the monks, it is the only way to attain infinite knowledge and thus liberation i.e., *moksha*. Thus yoga can develop our mind and manner of thinking and we may attain the true knowledge of reality, faith in the teachings of the *Tirthankaras*, and pure conduct; it is thus intimately connected to the three Jewels of right knowledge, right faith and right practice respectively, *samyagjnana, samyagdarshana, and samyakcharitra.*

III. Ultimate Reality in Buddhism:

> When appearances and names are put away and all discrimination ceases that which remains is the true and essential nature of things and, as nothing can be predicate as to the nature of essence, it is called the "Suchness" of Reality. This universal, undifferentiated, inscrutable Suchness is the only Reality, but it is variously characterised as Truth, Mind-essence, Transcendental Intelligence, Perfection of Wisdom, etc. This Dharma of the imagelessness of the essence nature of Ultimate Reality is the Dharma which has been proclaimed by all the Buddhas, and when all things are understood in full agreement with it, one is in possession of Perfect Knowledge.[61]

There are two forms of Buddhism known, *Theravada* school which is known as the conservative branch and *Mahayana* school which is the liberal branch, Nagarjuna, a contemporary of *Kaniska*, gave a separate form to Buddhism, called the *Mahayana*. *Mahayanism* is the culmination of the movement which led to the secession of the *Mahasamghikas*[62] from *Theravadins*. *Mahayana* has developed its doctrine in a mystical, theological and devotional way. The *Hinayana* or *Theravada* meaning a deficient vehicle, *Hinayana* school teaches that there is neither a personal god nor a spiritual or material substance which exists by itself as Ultimate Reality. According to *Hinayana* Buddhism:

> All things are momentary, the so called permanent entities, space and nirvana, doesn't exist. They are name of negations. All being consists of momentary entities called *dharmas.* There is no thinker, but only thoughts; no feeler, but only feelings. It is pure phenomenalism

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[61] Quoted in Wilson Andrew (ed.), *World Scripture, A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts,* (United States: Paragon House, 1995), p. 58.

[62] S. Radhakrishnan*, Indian Philosophy, Vol., I, 2nd Edition,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 500.

maintaining the non-existence of substances or individuals, it believes in the absolute existence of *dharmas*, small and brief realities which, grouped as cause and effect, crate the pseudo-individuals.[63]

The perceptual reality instead of originating from a primordial being such as Brahman is a product of transitory factors of existence which depend functionally upon each other. However, the existence of gods is not rejected; Buddha says: they are only temporary beings that attained heaven using the same virtues as any human disciple. Gods are not worshiped, do not represent the basis for morality, and are not the givers of happiness. The Ultimate reality is nothing but a transcendent truth, which governs the universe and human life.[64]

The *Mahayana* Buddhism claims that the early speeches of the Buddha contradict some conservative doctrines of the *Theravada* school. It says that the *Mahayana sutras* were revealed many years after the master's death. For them the Ultimate Reality is also an ultimate truth of emptiness that denies any notion of substantial reality. According to it, the world is a concatenation of interdependent phenomena devoid of any basis. *Mahayana* Buddhism accepted the notion of many Buddha's and thus it involves a devotional aspect which was in need of reconciliation with the doctrine of emptiness. This has resulted in their doctrine of three bodies of the Buddha *Trikaya* which was later developed by the *Yogachara* School as Buddha-hood that is the ultimate reality.

The three bodies of existence are as follows: *Dharmakaya* symbolizes the essential body of Buddha, representing emptiness. It is the ultimate truth that governs the world, while *Samboghakaya,* the body of enjoyment, is the body of the Buddha in their pure lands, where the *Mahayana* doctrine was preached to those reborn here and lays as much stress on love and aims at the salvation every conscious being and to encounter in *nirvana* the One Reality that is void of which we have experience and knowledge. Mahayana holds a middle position on the nature of the world, for them it is neither real nor unreal, they also affirms that the nature actually exist, but also denies its absolute reality, waves exist, but not absolutely, the world is a phenomenon, temporary, subject to flow and change. The real and the phenomenal are not ultimately different but they are two moments of the same thing, one reality with

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[63] Ibid, pp. 502-503.
[64] C.T. Benedict, *One God in One Man*, (United Kingdom: Milton Keynes, Author House, June, 2007), p. 117.

other aspects.[65] *Mahayana* calls us to take part in the world, evolving new social and religious ideals.

The physical body of Siddhartha Gautama is the third body of the Buddha, the *Nirmanakaya;* this image is manifested in the world for the benefit of the lowliest of beings, the most ignorant and weak, unable to attain a pure land. *Mahayana* takes a different stand on the person of Siddhartha Gautama. According to the traditional view he was a physical being, the founder of the four noble truths and the first human to reach *nirvana*. In *Mahayana* Buddhism he is considered to be only one of many Buddha's, the compassionate beings that help other humans to find liberation.

The Buddhist ethical religious movement came out with different schools of thought their main branch supported the *Sarvastivada* or the realistic theory that everything exists. *Kathavatthu* deals with many of these sects and schools. According to the Hindu thinkers there are four main Buddhist distinguished schools, first two schools come under *Hinayana*, and last two comes under *Mahayana*. Those who worship the bodhisattvas and read the *Mahayana Sutras* are called *Mahayanists* or the great, whereas though who doesn't perform deeds are called Hinayanists or the small.[66] The schools namely: i) *Vaibhasikas*, ii) *Sautrantikas*, who are realists or *Sarvastivadins*, (they believing that there is a self- existent universe in space and time, where mind holds a place on equal terms with other finite things.) iii) *Yogacara*, who are idealist, and iv) *Madhyamikas* or *Sunyavadi*.

The *Sunya-vada* of *Madhyamika*:

The term *sunya* is interpreted in various ways, for some it is nothingness because for them it is true of experience and for others it is a permanent principle, superior, and indefinable, immanent in all things. To the former it is true of the world of the experience, whereas for the latter it is metaphysical reality. It is a universally abstract and metaphysical concept; all notions depend on a hidden affirmation. Thus absolute negation is impossible, and all negation depends on a hidden affirmation. According to the *Lankavatara* sutra (*sagathaka, 167*), the real nature of an object cannot be determined by the intellect and cannot, therefore, be described. That which is real must be independent and should not depend on anything else for its existence and

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[65] Radhakrishnan S*., Op. Cit* pp. 509-11.
[66] Ibid, p. 526

origin. But everything we know is dependent on some condition, hence it cannot be called real and the original is the supernatural, but we cannot say that it is unreal.

> The eye does not see and the mind does not think; this is the highest truth, wherein men do not enter. The land wherein the full vision of all objects is obtained at once has by the Buddha been called the *paramartha*, or absolute truth, which cannot be preached in words.[67]

Nagarjuna, a *Brahmin* born in South India about the second century A.D., is said to be the founder of this school. It is also said that *Asvaghosa*, the author of *Buddacarita*, was a pioneer of the same school. *Madhyamakakarika* is the famous work of Nagarjuna, in which he expresses the great skill of the philosophy of the *Madhyamika. Madhyamika* holds that there is nothing mental or non-mental, which is real. The universe is *sunya* or void of reality. But *Madhyamika*'s view is not really nihilism, as ordinarily supposed, in that it does not deny all reality but only the apparent phenomenal world perceived by us. Beyond this ordinary world there is a reality that is not describable. Being devoid of the supernatural character, the ever-changing state of the phenomenal world, that which is beyond though, which not produced, is not born, which is without measure, is called *sunya*.[68]

But it is not the negative aspect of the ultimate reality; it is only a description of what it is not. It will be seen that the indescribable nature of things is deduced from the fact of their being dependent on other things or conditions. It would appear; therefore, that *sunya* only means the conditional character of things, and their consequent constant changeability and indeterminability. Thus *sunya* only signifies the tentative character of things whose result always changes. This path is called middle (sunya *or madhyama*) because *Madhyamika* philosophy tries to adopt the mean between absolute affirmation and absolute negation of the reality of things and asserting their conditional existence. Therefore Buddha called the theory of dependent origination the middle path.

According to Nagarjuna, *sunya-vada* is called the middle path because it implies that every character of a thing is conditioned by something else thus its existence is relative to the condition, and therefore this theory can be interpreted as a theory of relativity. *Madhyamikas*, holds that there is a supernatural reality beyond the

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[67] Ibid, p. 570
[68] Ibid, p. 571

phenomenal world. The real truth is only a stepping-stone to the attainment of the higher. The *nirvana* experience can take a person beyond our ordinary experience which is indescribable, but it could be only suggested negatively with the help of the words that describe our common experience. Nagarjuna therefore, describes *nirvana* with a series of negatives that which is not known, not acquired anew, not destroyed, not eternal, not suppressed, not generated is called nirvana.

As with *nirvana*, so also with the *Tathagata* (one who has realized nirvana): his nature also cannot be described; he declined to discuss the question. The teaching of Dependent Origination has many names in English, such as Interdependent Origination or Conditional Genesis or Causal Nexus, but the Sanskrit term is *Pratityasamutpada*.[69] It is called Dependent Origination and is a core teaching of all schools of Buddhism.

No beings or phenomena exist independently of other beings and phenomena. All are caused to exist by other beings or phenomena. Further, the beings and phenomena arise and perpetually cease, therefore other things and beings perpetually arise and perpetually cease. All this goes on in one vast field or, series of beingness. In Buddhism there is no teaching of a first cause, the Buddha emphasized understanding the nature of thing as they are over speculation of past, present and future. The past is an uncertain and the future is an unpredictable, what is experienced in the present seems to be that is, we cannot have present without the past and the future. Time: seem to be a form of thought, conceived by the imagination of emptiness.

There are various similarities in Jain and Buddhist philosophy, Jains do not believe in Gods, Buddha remained silent about it. Throughout Buddhist literature we see the names of Brahma, Indra, Laxmi etc. Concerning reincarnation there is a misconception created due to *Jataka* stories which were written about 900 years after Buddha. Whereas Buddha had different concept of an earthen lamp lighting other lamps, light from one lamp can light several lamps, but the original flame is not the same as the flame in other lamps, therefore it is not the soul which migrates from one person to the other but it is the migration of energy from one lamp to others.

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[69] Ibid, p. 556

Buddha had due respect for the Vedic sages, in the original source of Buddha's teaching in *Tripitaka*, he praised Vedas, he was not interested in speculation, but to find out the cause of suffering and to eradicate the suffering from the human beings, he said, *Be your own light* and not to follow any sage blindly, but to examine them, their teachings and then only you may accept the concept. He preached on compassion, non-ego, non-attachment, friendship and love for all. Buddha gives the message from *Bhagwad Gita*: these criteria were very essential for the monastic life. He says that there were Buddhas in the past and there will be Buddhas in the future. His message to his father that you have come from the lineage of kings but I have come from the lineage of sages shows that Buddha was one of the sages in the long lineage of sages of the past. He made a change in the society, had several female disciples, some from very wealthy families, he allowed women to have their own *Sangha*, but after the death of Buddha his followers did not give the same liberty to nuns, but the Mahayana Buddhism did recruit nuns.

IV. Ultimate Reality in Sikhism:

> You are the creator of all.
> You give the soul, the body, and life.
> We are meritless, without virtue.
> Bless us, O Merciful Lord.
> He creates the Universe and then reveals Himself
> To us and in us. He made Himself manifest.[70]

Sikhism is one of the most prominent surviving religions of the Bhakti movement in various parts of India during the medieval period. Originated by Guru Nanak (A.D. 1469-1539) and continued by nine successors called *Nanakpanthis* or *Nanakprast*. They provided an effective organization for the propagation and spread of the creed and the fundamentals of its teachings to the devotees for two centuries, but with the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708, the line of gurus ended.[71] The Sikh Gurus and their followers lived among the common people, performing the routine duties of life, blending religious, social or political purpose thus merging all cultures into a single monolithic whole. To Nanak rituals were meaningless, even religious symbols carried no sense if they failed to convey what they stood for, what matters is purity of mind and sincerity of purpose.

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[70] Rajwant Singh and Georgia Rangel, "Sikhism", *Sourcebook of the World's Religions*, (ed.), Joel Beversluis, (California: New world Library, 2000), p. 93.

[71] L.M. Joshi, *Sikhism,* (Patiala: Punjab University, Second edition, 1980), 10-11.

Sikhism strictly follows the concept of monotheistic doctrine and believes in one God; Nanak stress the idea of the oneness of God, that the creator and destroyer is one who is the Almighty who is coming down to the cosmic reality. Sikh gurus described God in many ways, through their hymns included in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the holy scripture of Sikhism. There the oneness of the deity is consistently emphasized throughout. In the first passage of the scripture *Guru Granth Sahi,* God is depicted in the *Mool Mantar.*

> There is but One God, He is the Eternal Truth, the Creator, All-Pervading Divine Spirit unfearful, without hate and enmity, Immortal entity, Unborn. Self-existent and He is realized by his own grace of the True Guru.[72]

This sense of unity is the source of power. In the following verses they speak of person of any religion, they speak of human heart and searching mind; in the verses as these indeed indicate that unique concept of unity and universality. "The one God is the Father of all; we are His children."[73] No one is a stranger to the human beings, we are in harmony with each other, and the one God is distributed in all creation at the sight of which Nanak is in bloom of Joy. The existing things are distinct from them, all our senses comprehend is illusion; God is the sole reality, he is alone eternal and abiding. The soul *atma* exists due to the reflection of Supreme soul the reality *paramatma* and it will merge into it like water merges.

God and Soul are identical also like fire and the sparks; same way *Guru Granth* says: *Atam meh Ram, Ram meh Atam i.e.* The Ultimate eternal reality resides in the soul and the soul is contained in him. Sea waves spring up in numbers and yet the waves, made of again water; in the same way all souls have sprung from the universal being and would merge again into it. Sikhism believed that God is the creator of the universe, which exists in time and space. It is changing and is governed by fixed laws; God created the world of life, by a single word, i.e., God expressed himself in *Naam* (Immanent God) and *Shabad* these are the creative and dynamic immanence of God. He created and fills all, and is yet separate. There are many hymns in *Guru Granth*

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[72] Evan Finkelstein, "Common Features of the Dharmic Traditions and Interactions among Them" *Compassion in the Four Dharmic Traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism,* (ed.), Nanda P. Ved, (New Delhi: Prabhat Prakashan, 2016), p. 62.

[73] Daljeet Singh, *Sikhism: Its Philosophy and History*, (Chandigarh: Institute of Sikh Studies, 1997), p. 202.

Sahib which says that God was there even before the creation, God is ever creative.[74] Thus the time and space in Sikhism are beyond human understanding, only the creator knows it. God existed as beyond incarnations, formless self-existent, the primal creator himself and had no creator. He simply is, has ever been and shall ever be by himself.

> He is always Benevolent, You are my Mother, You are my Father, You are my protector everywhere', 'He relieves the sufferings of the downtrodden; He is the succor of the succor-less', 'God is eyes to the blind, riches to the poor, He is the Ocean of virtues.[75]

God is the super architect of the universe, He is both Transcendent and Immanent, it is Transcendent God who is everywhere in every human heart, it is the same God who is both *Nirgun* and *Sargun*, we give different names to God, but He is one not two.[76] He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer, he has created the universe from his own self, only God has existence from Himself and therefore all things existing outside of God have in God the reason for their existence.[77]

God willed and he created the universe and whenever God desires, he merges back into it, this process of creation has been repeated innumerable times which no one knows. Thus, He created the universe by a single word, i.e., God expressed himself in *Naam* and *Sabad*. These are the creative and dynamic immanence of God. Therefore the time and space are beyond human understanding, only the creator knows it, He existed beyond incarnations, formless self-existent, the primal creator himself had no creator. He simply is, has ever been and shall ever be by himself. God has no incarnation: in Sikhism God never has taken birth nor taken form. The God of Sikhism was not born of a woman, thus man can never become God and thus God and man are not identical, the scripture says; "God alone is the One who is not born of a woman."[78]

In Sikhism God would be revealed to the soul through the grace of Guru, and guru appears in three ways through God, the ten Sikh *Gurus* and the *guru shabad*, for the God's grace, guru's instruction and guidance and the scriptural *Shabad* is the most important. Everything moves according to the will of God and to be in union with

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[74] Daljeet Singh, *Op. cit*, p. 20-21.
[75] Ibid, p. 22
[76] Ibid, p. 21
[77] Joshi L. M., *Op. Cit*, p. 58.
[78] Daljeet Singh, *Op. Cit*, p. 23.

Him, like Semitic religions i.e., Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Sikhism insists on the unity of God. God created the universe and governs it; a day will come when all the world religions will unite in the worship of one God. Thus Nanak says '*There is but one God… the one God whom I worship is both Allah and Rama; to the formless one I bow in my heart.*'

> The one God is the Father of all; we are all his Children;
>
> O Guru, O friend, I dedicate my heart to thee;
>
> Let me but have a glimpse of God.
>
> The one Lord is the cause of all causes,
> Knowledge, wisdom, discrimination are His gifts to us;
> He is not far, He is not near, He is with us all.[79]

His grace is essential. Thus the knowledge of the ultimate reality one can get through revelation, through grace and mystical experience. Guru Nanak says: "He is not ascendible through intellect, through mere scholarship or cleverness at argument; He is met, when He pleases, through devotion." (SGGS, 436)

To become one with the Almighty, the spirit has to get merged into the divine, through meditation there is communication between God and the finite being's consciousness, thus the human being has to surrender oneself to God and merge into the Almighty the creator, hence human incarnation is a chance to meet God and enter into the mystic reality.

Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism were born out of Hinduism and rejected the main Hindu scripture *Vedas* of the Hindu faith, and they came out with their own scripture for Jains, the *Agamas*; for Buddhism, the *Tripitaka*; Sikhism has ten gurus who created the texts of the religion, which is called '*Guru Granth Sahib*'. Yet the basic principles from Hinduism that is the beliefs in karma, in doing good to others, acting selflessly and also in reincarnation. Hinduism shares the concepts of life cycle of rebirth, for them all were basically derived from the *Brahman* tradition, the faithful should spend their life in search of unity with *Brahman* following the teaching of *Vedas*. Jainism's concept of life and death is quite similar to the Vedic concept, non-violence and respect to the sacred life existing around the human being may release

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[79] Ibid, p. 53

the human being from the circle of re-incarnation, for them everything in the world has a soul. Thus Jainism accepts the soul parts from the body when it dies to be re-incarnated into something/somebody else. Thus Jains do not believe in the unity of soul and the body, it is the principle of the three religions that the soul will remain in the human world, only change the appearance after being reincarnated into some other being or object. Buddhism teaches eightfold path to release from the state of infinite reincarnation and reach nirvana that is the end of the life cycle by living life full of dignity and rejection of all other attachments causing desires and strife.

Hinduism believes that the supreme/Ultimate reality is *Brahman*, from him the entire universe initiated; water and fire are the seeds of creation that made the creation in different forms possible. The *Rig Vedas* 10:129 says that *Brahman* came after the original creation, who knows when this creation started. One who sits in the highest heaven knows or perhaps knows not. *Vedas* were written and explained much later in *Brahamanas*, *Upanishads* and *Aranyakas*. The philosophy/*darshanas* written are *Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Mimansa, Yoga, Sankhya* etc., which provide a logical basis, and ways to connect the inner self with supreme reality, connecting us to supreme reality.

V. Ultimate Reality in Judaism:

> When the Hoy One created the first human being, God led them around the Garden of Eden and said. 'Look at My works. See how beautiful they are, how excellent! For your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil or destroy my world, for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you.[80]

Throughout the history of Judaism and in the life of Israelites, there has been a tension between their religious beliefs and the religion of their rulers. For Jews, God is the transcendent source of the Universe, a father figure whom the believers were referring to as, "the God of Israel our Father, forever and ever."[81] "For Thou art Father, our Redeemer from of old is thy name.[82]

The challenge for the Judaic religion was to bridge the gap between God and human reality. Genesis account of creation posits an omnipotent and transcendent God who

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[80] Rabbi Herbert Bronstein, "Judaism", *Sourcebook of the World's Religions*, Edited by Beversluis Joel (California, New World Library, 2000), p. 88.

[81] *The Holy Bible*, RSV, *I Chronicles 29*: 10, (Bangalore: Collins for Theological Publication, 1988), p. 378.

[82] Ibid, *Isaiah* 63: 16, p. 759.

harmoniously created the universe within six days whereas the Biblical texts depict a more transient God who does not exist apart from the forces of nature and does not appear to have control over evil doers. Thus God, whose sovereignty is consistently threatened by independent or political leaders, reflects the influence of Mesopotamian pagan and polytheistic cultures upon Israelite religion.

> The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.[83]

It means that God is the architect who shaped the Earth from void, began to create the world and the things of the world from undifferentiated water. The Mesopotamian creation myth known as "Enuma Elish" also speaks of a primeval swirl of water from which everything else was created[84]. We can see that in both narratives, in the beginning there is the natural force of water which existed prior to the creation. In Genesis it is there before God begins the process of creation, God never creates it. The Genesis creation story does not contain a myth about how God came into existence in relation to other gods, yet there is an allusion to other divine beings in Genesis 1:26, who seem to be primordial, indicating a *divine assembly* offering advice to God, but God appears to have the final say on matters of creation.

In 1Kings 22:19-23, there appear to be a small pantheon of "junior" divinities similar to the other gods mentioned in the Enuma Elish, who are important, but subordinate. Yet in Psalm 74:12-17 there is a reference to a cosmic battle in which the God of Israel victoriously fought the Yam, *sea* while smashing the heads of Tanninin *sea monsters* and Livyatan (Leviathan) the twisting the seven-headed dragon. Immediately following the cosmic battle, the psalmist refers to God fashioning day and night, sun and moon, boundaries of the earth. This creation myth is a direct parallel to a Canaanite creation myth discovered in Ugarit (an ancient Syrian city) from the 14th century B.C.E., in which the god Baal defeated the ocean prince Yam, the Judge River, Lotan (Leviathan) and Tannin.[85]

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[83] Ibid, *Genesis* 1:2, p. 1.
[84] Enuma Elish-The Babylonian Epic of Creation. Ancient History Encyclopedia http://www.ancient.eu/article/225/ Article: Joshua J. Marks. Accessed on 22/02/2019.
[85] *The Holy Bible: RSV, Psalm 74:12-17*, p. 543.

In that polytheistic age, Abraham was the first to believe in a monotheistic God. Within this atmosphere Abram answers the call of God and realizes the ultimate reality that there is only one true God. Abram was the first to recognize and worship the one God, thus the monotheistic belief came to life. The God of monotheism asked Abram to leave his home and country and gave him three promises: i) Relationship with God, ii) numerous descendants and iii) the Promised Land.

> I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing, I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.[86]

Abram followed the direction of God without even knowing who that God is, Abram has been called a man of faith and as the result of his obedience, God changed his name to Abraham, meaning the father of the people. Abraham's ultimate test of obedience, the sacrifice of his only son Isaac, adds further proof of this. In the beginning of the Creation narratives of the Hebrew Bible, Adam and Eve's disobedience to God's commands takes root, even after the great flood in which only Noah and his family was saved, God had once again started a new creation. Most important is the uniqueness of the Covenant relationship between God and Abraham. Here we see that God does something for Abraham and he does something for God, thus the blessings of God are passed on from generation to generation. The story of Abraham is about obedience to the will of God, by the end we see that he fully trusted the God who made extraordinary promises.

VI. Ultimate Reality in Christianity:

Christianity, with more than two billion adherents, is the world's largest religion, based on the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, and proclaims that Jesus, the Son of God, died on the cross, was resurrected, ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father. Christians believe that there is only one God who has created heaven and earth. The divine Godhead consists of three persons i.e., God the Father (Almighty God) who is the creator, God the Son (Jesus Christ) who is the redeemer and God the Holy Spirit, the sustainer.

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[86] *Ibid., Genesis 12:1-3*, p. 9.

The main substance of Christianity is the life, death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are scriptural evidences of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, (Mathew 27:27-44, Mark 15:16-32, Luke 23, John 19:17-37), his rising from the death, (Mathew 28:5-6, Mark 16:6, Luke 24:1-9), and Jesus' ascension to heaven (Mark 16: 19, Luke 24:50-52, Acts 1:1-11). And Christians also believe in the second coming of Jesus (John 14:3, Acts 1:11).

Two thousand years ago, Christianity was considered a Jewish sect, not a separate religion since Jewish leaders and rulers had not accepted Jesus and his teaching and the new religion was established later. Thus Jews and Christians accept the Old Testament of the Bible. In addition to that, Christians have the New Testament, a second part of the Bible, which narrates the whole episode of Jesus' life on earth. The cross is the symbol of Christ, and Christmas and Easter are the major feasts of Christianity.

Historians and scriptural scholars believed that Jesus was a real person, who was born between 2 B.C. and 7 B.C., by the intervention of the Holy Spirit, to a Jewish Virgin named Mary, in the town of Bethlehem, in Jerusalem (Luke 1:26-35, Mathew1:18-21). Many scriptural scholars say that Jesus came to Reform Judaism but the Jews did not receive him, thus they killed him on the cross, but through his resurrection and ascension into heaven, on the day of Pentecost, the 'Holy Spirit' established the new *Christian Religion* and the Church came into existence.[87]

The Bible describes different pictures of ultimate reality, it elevates the personhood to intimacy with the finite reality of nature and all it contains, our reasoning cannot lead us towards the ultimate reality.

a) Ultimate reality according to the Old Testament:

Finite beings depend on the infinite or supernatural being called *God*, that being is beyond human existence and beyond the universe, nevertheless abiding in and with it; who communicates, acts and is ready to enter reciprocally into human relationships with responding to their acts. We have distinct revelation of Ultimate reality in Hebrew literature as in the book of prophet Isaiah, who speaks to the people of Israel on behalf of God to his chosen people to reason with him, he warns them of judgment

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[87] *Ibid.* ,Acts 2:1-4, pp. 112-113.

for disobedience, for injustices and idolatry and promises them repentant people will be forgiven and he, *God* established with them a covenant, Yahweh the God the creator and the Lord of the universe, threatening and promising them according to their response to his call.

The Prophet Isaiah's vision is considered as the classical Biblical text showing God's Ultimate and Supernatural existence and also God's personal nature through his emotional outbursts of anger due to people's unfaithfulness and injustice. If they repent and turn, God will show his mercy and compassion to them. The Philosophers have pointed out anthropomorphisms of Hebrew narratives and their figurative expression of God's human like character but Isaiah's revelation of God cannot be interpreted as figurative, where he, along with prophet Hosea, among others, also reveals God as showing emotional grief, anger and compassion.[88] Isaiah's theme repeatedly points out God's steadfast love for his chosen people. In Isaiah Chapter 38, King Hezekiah was sick and on the point of death, Isaiah the prophet came and said to him, "Set your house in order; for you shall die, you shall not recover."[89] King Hezekiah begged and wept bitterly to the Lord for some more years of life, and the Lord sent Isaiah again to him with message, saying; "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.[90]

Yahweh has delivered him the city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and defends this city, King Hezekiah has changed his life and become obedient to the Lord, this narrative is about God's responsiveness to a king. Whereas extra-Biblical metaphysical comments indicate ultimate reality isn't affected by finite being. As Olson points out:

> Plato's "form of the Good," Aristotle's "Unmoved Mover" and "Thought thinking itself," Hegel's "Absolute Spirit" all are incapable of changing his or its mind in response to events in time, space, and history. But God, the ultimate being, the absolute person of Biblical revelation, is intensely personal, self-limiting, and self-determining, and can voluntarily change his mind in response to his covenant partners' pleas.[91]

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[88] Roger E. Olson, *The Essentials of Christian Thought: Seeing Reality Though the Biblical Story,* (Michigan: Zondervan, Harper Collins, 2017), p. 59.
[89] The Holy Bible: RSV, *Isaiah 38: 1,* (Bangalore: Collins for Theological Publication, 1988), p. 733.
[90] Ibid, *Isaiah 38:5*, p. 733.
[91] Roger E. Olson, Op. cit., p.60

At the core of every metaphysic there is the vision of ultimate reality that is something absolute that is the source of all that is. Here absolute means unsurpassable explanatory power, thus whatever sustains, controls or governs everything else, hence to reject ultimate reality is to reject metaphysics entirely. Therefore with all inquiring minds, metaphysic is unavoidable: e.g. "Why is there something rather than nothing? And what is the meaning of existence?"[92] Hence Whitehead says Christianity is a religion exploring for a metaphysic; at a times it has accepted these and other metaphysical visions and undertook to synthesize them with Biblical Christianity.[93]

Is the God of Isaiah *Yahweh* in reality, ultimate God? Does he truly deserve this metaphysical title? For these God answers through Isaiah:

> To whom then will you compare me that I should be like him? Says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who bring out their host by number, calling them all by name; and because he is strong in power not one is missing.[94]

Isaiah had no doubt about God of Israel being the ultimate reality on which everything is dependent, Who created the heaven and extended the universe and He gives breath to the human beings and spirit to those who walk in it. This all powerful and supernatural God upon whom everything is dependent, makes a covenant with his people,

> I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.[95]

He speaks through the prophet Isaiah; your redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the Lord, who made all things, who stretched out the heavens alone, who spread out the earth."[96] Yahweh declares his sovereignty that;

> Men may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light

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[92] Olson E. Roger, *The Essentials of Christian Thought: Seeing Reality Though the Biblical Story,* (Michigan: Zondervan, Harper Collins, 2017), p. 140.
[93] Ibid, Cf., *The Essentials of Christian Thought*, p. 141.
[94] *The Holy Bible: RSV, Isaiah 40:25-26,* (Bangalore: Collins for Theological Publication, 1988), p. 735.
[95] Ibid, *Isaiah 42:6-7, p. 737.*
[96] Ibid, *Isaiah 44:24, p. 741*

and create darkness, I make weal and create woe, I am the Lord, who does all these things.[97]

Thus the God whom Isaiah depicts is the personal and supernatural being as it is described above, therefore the God called *Yahweh* who reveals himself in the Old Testament of the Bible, He himself is the Ultimate reality, above him there is no other God or other Ultimate reality, thus God Yahweh holds all power. We see he has delegated his powers to some of his chosen people he is free to use that power as he wishes to and if the power is given to a person who does not use it, he is threatened by nature. *Yahweh*, the ultimate reality, is by nature loving-kindness, long-suffering and compassionate. He also cares about justice and never withholds judgment.[98]

b) Ultimate reality according to the New Testament:

For Christians, New Testament is further disclosure of God that has built up on the Hebrew idea of Ultimate reality as the supernatural God on which everything else is dependant. Paul, the Hebrew convert, gives a clear example in Acts 17, of travel to Athens and dialogues with Greek Gentiles about ultimate reality. Some of Paul's followers in Athens were Epicurean and Stoic philosophers and their idea of ultimate reality differed from the Hebrews view point. For Stoics, nature itself is the Ultimate, for them Ultimate reality was impersonal. While for other Athenians there is no Ultimate reality, whereas they have many deities. The Christian Biblical thought, in contrast with Greek philosophy says; "Souls are created by God; they are not emanations, offshoots, of God's own substance.[99]

Also in contrast to other world views, the alienation between God, ultimate reality and creation is not built into matter or ontological difference between God and it, but the alienation is a result of misbehave with God-given freedom. Sin and stupidity, spiritual alienation, result from "hardening of the heart" not from a "fall" of souls into bodies or entrapment of the divine "sparks" in the sensible world."[100]

Paul accepts the teaching of prophet Isaiah and preaches to the Athenians that;

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[97] Ibid, Isaiah, 45: 6-7, p. 741.
[98] Olson, Op. cit, p. 61.
[99] Ibid, p. 81
[100] Claude Tresmontant, *A Study of Hebrew Thought,* Trans. Michael Francis Gibson (New York, Descle, 1960), p.146

The God who made the world and everything, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything.[101]

Then Paul addresses the Hebrew dimensional idea of God. From all the nation of the universe, He made one face of the earth, having determined assigned periods and the boundaries of their inhabitation that they should seek God in hopes that they might experience Him and find Him. He is not away from us, since in him we live, move and have our existence, for we are his offspring.[102] In Athens Paul expressed briefly that God is transcendent and immanent; God is present within the creation and above the creation, he needs nothing, is all powerful:

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there! If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there thy hand shall lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Let only darkness cover me, and the light about me be night", even the darkness is not dark to thee, the night is bright as the day; for darkness is as light with thee.[103]

Here Paul in his Biblical narrative describes the Ultimate reality, upon which everything, Supernatural and personal, depends. This reality leads to the book of *Exodus* where Moses asked the Lord, if the people of Israel asked me, "What is his name? What shall I say to them? God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM" and he said, Say this to the people of Israel, I AM has sent me to you."[104]

This is expressed by the name *Yahweh*, in many English translations of the Bible as Jehovah, Hebrews and the early Christians substituted as *Adonai*, meaning reverence for the holy name of God.[105] Brunner, the great Christian theologian, says that ultimate reality is personal not impersonal power, it is rational metaphysics not based on revelation. Thus the Biblical view of ultimate reality is not an it but it is a He, (the Bible refers to God as He and as the Father; it has been taken by Hebrew and Christian writers that God is male), the Biblical narrative that Christian faithful

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[101] The Holy Bible: R.SV, *Acts 17: 24-25*, (Bangalore: Collins for Theological Publication, 1988), p. 130.
[102] Ibid, *Acts17: 26-28*, p. 130.
[103] Ibid, *Psalms 139: 7-12*, p 580
[104] Ibid, *Exodus* 3:13-14, p. 49.
[105] Olson, Op. cit, p. 62-63

believed to be God's own story, and includes God's covenant people, ultimate, final, eternal, all powerful, determining reality present within it. This metaphysical vision has been variously marked personality theism and biblical theistic personalise, at the heart of ultimate reality, there is one unifying source, there is intelligence, a free agency, and independent will, loving, kind and just.

Christianity believes in the Trinitarian God i.e. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit; here each person of the Holy Trinity has the fullness of divine nature and the ontological character of the Ultimate Reality is defined by the reality and relation that exists among the three hypostases. The definition of this aspect was made by the Cappadocia fathers of the Church that is Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus. Because the idea of the Trinity is so difficult for the human mind to grasp, witness the famous story of Augustine and the child trying to fill the ocean into a hole with the help of a little pail.

The Holy Trinity should be understood as the only way for God's existence. The Ultimate Reality cannot exist beyond or above the Holy Trinity. In His revelation to Moses, God said; "I am who I am. And he said, Say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you."[106] It means the Trinitarian God is self-sufficient; He does not depend on any exterior element. The Trinitarian God does not admit the existence of a deeper reality; "I am the first and I am the last: apart from me there is no God."[107] "I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega,* the first and the last, beginning and the end."[108] Thus there is no deeper reality beyond the Trinity; this is the Ultimate Reality in Christianity that is the basis of the Christian belief and faith.

VII. Ultimate Reality in Islam:

Prophet Muhammad founded Islam in the beginning of 6th century. It is a monotheistic Abrahamic religion. Islam is from Arabic word *Aslama*, means total surrender or submission to *Allah*. The adherents of Islam are called Muslims. In the *Quran*, Allah presented as the eternal being, transcendent and almighty. "*Allah* is one, the Eternal God. He begot none, nor He begotten, none too equal to Him."[109]

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[106] The Holy Bible: R.SV, *Exodus* 3:14, p. 49.
[107] Ibid., *Isaiah*, 44:6, p. 740.
[108] Ibid., *Revelation* 21: 6, p. 241, or 22:13. p.242
[109] *The Quran*, Surah 112, (Beirut: Lebanon, Dear Al-Choura, 1980), p. 463.

It seems that *Allah* has the same attributes as God the Father of the Old Testament has. The basic element of Islam is that God is the only Divine being; he has no partners and co-creators in his divinity. Other beliefs are: Oneness of God, Prophets and messengers, revealed scriptures (not limited to the Quran), Angels, last judgment and belief in predestination. Bearing witness to the unity of *Allah* and Muhammad, prayer, alms giving, fasting and holy pilgrimage to Mecca are the five pillars of Islam.

Allah is the eternal and absolute reality, first and the last, seen and unseen, transcendent, cannot be experienced by the human mind, he is beyond the limitation of time and space, he was before time, space, before the world came into existence, he was the light of the heaven and earth. The attributes of Allah are only finite approaches which are the pointers to reality. Allah is omnipotent, he is the creator, and he began the process of creation and adds to creation as he pleases. God is not only creator but also cherisher, sustainer, protector, helper, guide, reliever of distress and suffering of all his creatures, and the most merciful, kind and the most forgiving, it is he who gives life and death and has power over all things. He has ordains laws and grants guidance. Allah creates man's sprit out of nothing and created mankind from this single spirit of view of the evolution process. Since Allah has created human beings, breathed on him a bit of his own spirit, thus human being is perfect, and fullest achievement, by the order of Allah a little has been communicated to human being. There are the three degrees of the consciousness. Man shares with animals the impulsive mind, whereas the careful or morally conscious mind, which is the struggle between good and evil and regret for evil done, is unique to human beings. The mind which is perfectly in tune with divine will is the mind in peace.

Allah has subjected, for the use of man, everything in the heaven and on the earth. He has given freedom to human beings to choose good or evil. Besides this he has given him guidance through revelation and inspiration so that he may return evil with good, repel wickedness with what is the best. The gracious benefits help to change human mind from evil to good. Thus ultimately all the goodness comes from God. Whatever evil comes from man is from his own soul. God's plan to provide humans the free use of the divine attribute of power and take all precautionary measures to suit different situations.

VIII. 'Family Resemblances' of the concept of 'Ultimate Reality' in the World Religions:

In 1984 a group of spiritual leaders and teachers were invited at St. Benedict's Monastery, Snowmass, Colorado, USA to share among them their religious beliefs particularly those components in the respective traditions that have proved most helpful to the world religions. There were leaders of different world religions and denominations like the Buddhist, Tibetan Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Islamic, Native American, Roman Catholic, Russian Orthodox, and the Protestant. Trust and friendship was the main goal. The meeting consist of the following points: i) the world religions bear witness to the experience of the ultimate Reality to which they gave various names: *Yahweh,* Almighty God, *Allah, Brahman*, the Absolute, God, and the Great Spirit. ii) The Ultimate Reality is not limited by any name or concept. iii) The Ultimate Reality is the basis of infinite potency, iv) Faith opens, accepts and responds to the Ultimate Reality, thus the faith precedes all human belief system. v) Potency for human completeness that is enlightenment, salvation, transformation, blessedness, *nirvana* is possible for every human person. vi) The Ultimate Reality could be witness not only through the religious practices, but also witness through nature, art, human relationships and through the service towards others. vii) If the human beings are separated from Ultimate Reality, it is due to ignorance and illusion. viii) Discipline is very much essential to the spiritual life of human being; yet spiritual achievement is not the result of one's own efforts but the result of the occurrence of identity with the Ultimate Reality.[110]

It is very much necessary to extent formal practice of consciousness to all the aspects of human life. Humility, gratitude and a sense of humour are essential in the spiritual life. Prayer is communication with Ultimate Reality, it may be regarded as personal, impersonal or above them both. One may be surprised to see so many similarity and convergence in respective paths, only when we take closer look at certain points these becomes our focus of attention, thus human beings becomes more genuine in what one believed and why, at the same time making any effort to convince others of our own position, one may simply presented his own understanding as a gift to the others.

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[110] Thomas Keating, "Points of Similarity Found in Dialogue", *Sourcebook of the World's Religions*, Joel Beversluis (ed.), (California: New World Library, 2000), p. 137.

<div align="center">**CHAPTER II**</div>

<div align="center">**Religious Dialogue and Contemporary Indian Philosophers**</div>

Introduction:

Indian philosophy is more significant in the contemporary period since it has been given a separate and unique identity. As it is a difficult task to discuss all the contemporary thinkers in a Chapter, I have limited this study to the idealist and integral trend and referred to only some of the significant philosophers, namely, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, and Bhagvan Das who represent the idealist way in all details. Due to the pressing need of a solution to the problems concerning metaphysics, religion, national and international relations, systematic evaluation of the philosophy of contemporary Indian thinkers has also been attempted in the work.

Indian philosophy is specifically a search for ultimate truth, and as discussed in Chapter I, according to the Vedanta philosophy, the ultimate reality is Brahman, which is verily the self (*atman*). The central teaching of Vivekananda is the same as that of Vedanta, expressed in a language understandable to the modern man. Gandhi classifies religions as the human exponential expression that underlies and gives them reality, thus the heart of one religion is identical with the heart of the other religion, the essences are the same but the approaches are different.[1] Thus, religions differ only in non-essentials while in essentials they agree: Gandhi points out to the essential unity of all religions. Just as God is one though his names are different, religion is also one in spite of its different names; because all religions have been derived from God.[2]

Gandhi, Bhagvan Das, Vivekananda, and Tagore were leaders of the rise of nationalism, universal religion, co-existence and peace movement in India, and all these strongly supported internationalism and the ideal of world religion and brotherhood. They were idealists who interpret the world as the play and evolution of spirit. Matter, life and mind are manifestations of the spirit in the world. Spirit is not a

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[1] Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, (London & Dublin: Curzon Press Barnes & Noble Books, 1982), p. 18.

[2] Y.K. Singh. *Philosophical Foundation of Education*, (New Delhi: A. H. P. Publication, 2009), P. 88-89.

substance but life itself. The contemporary Indian philosophers, like the ancient Indian Upanishad thinkers, see the realisation of *Brahman* as the fullest expression of spirit of which the self and God are manifestations. All forms of knowledge are thus put into a synthetic relation to one truth, the one supreme and universal reality. Thus many contemporary Indian philosophers have acclaimed ancient *Vedanta* philosophy as the basis of their philosophical ideas. Let us see the thoughts of Vivekananda, Tagore, Gandhi and Bhagvan Das in this respect.

The Contemporary Indian philosophers demonstrated an integral view in their synthetic movement to religion. They have directed each great religion to humanity and stressed their significant unity. According to Tagore, all the religions manifest the same reality.

> These religions differ in details and often in moral significance, but they have a common tendency, in them men seek their own supreme value which they call divine in some personality anthropomorphic in character. In this Religion of man Tagore emphasized humanism as the core of all religions. He pointed out essential similarity in the teachings of the pioneers of all religions. [3]

All these religions, according to Tagore, express humanism, which is the core of all religions and there is an essential similarity in the teachings of the pioneers of all religions. In the 'Essential Unity of All Religions', Bhagvan Das examined the heart of each of the great religions of the world to discover the intuitive foundation from which they spring and thus to find out their unity in integral intuition. Contemporary Indian philosophy stresses harmony and co-existence within various religions and not the abolition of their diversity. Religion helps us gain inner experience; it is a rich nursery of spiritual growth and soul's discipline, endeavour and self-realisation.

I. Swami Vivekananda's Concept of Ultimate Reality:

Vivekananda was born in a well-to-do family at Calcutta, on 12th January 1863. Although his early life was not very eventful, he made a mark not only in literature and music but also swimming and wrestling. He studied Indian scriptures and also Western thought. His meeting with Sri Ramakrishna was the turning point of his life. He is the founder of the *Ramakrishna Math* at Belur, near Calcutta, through which he started social reform and service.

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[3] Ibid, p. 88

In Vivekananda's philosophy reality and God are not different concepts, whereas the traditional philosophy deals with reality as a metaphysical concept and God as a religious concept, but for Vivekananda such differences are irrelevant. His philosophy arises from the awareness of the social, religious and economic situation of India, he also realized that the social evils were the orthodoxy and superstitions prevalent at that time and he aimed at spiritual awakening. His philosophy is derived from the *Upanisads* and the Vedanta school of thought. He believes in the unity of everything that is the monistic nature of reality. Above all, his thought was shaped by his master Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa who had initiated him to the spiritual discipline and meditation that transformed his life. Swami Nikhilananda says:

> It was his Master who had taught him the divinity of soul, the non-duality of God-head, the unity of existence and one more great thing-that is the universality or harmony of all different religions.[4]

Vivekananda frequently describes reality in monotheistic ways and affirms God's character in definite mode. Thus, Vivekananda's philosophy does not perceive any contradiction between monism and monotheism, which refers to different dispositions and attitudes of men, the difference in dispositions does not create differences in truth as such, the difference is due to the different approaches to the truth, hence he freely keeps between monism and monotheism. He combines in his thought, abstract monism and Theism.

For Vivekananda, Absolute is a perfect unity, it is all one, there is neither time, space nor causation, that exists by itself, alone cannot have any cause, hence the distinction between whole and parts totally vanishes, *Brahman* is beyond space, time and causation, and is changeless. Thus all these mysteries of thought come in our way of apprehending God. Ghosh writes:

> God is neither outside nature nor inside nature, but God and nature and soul and universe are all convertible terms. You never see two things: it is your metaphorical words that have deluded you.[5]

Like Sankara, Vivekananda also accepts that the absolute may be depicted as *Sat-Cit-Ananda, Sat* meaning existence, and *Cit* meaning consciousness, are similar to the *Sat*

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[4] Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda: A Biography*, (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1989), p. 53.

[5] Avhijit Ghosh, "Swami Vivekananda on Reality and God", *Multidimensional Personality of Swami Vivekananda,* (ed.) Bonani Sinha, (Chhattishgarh: Booksclinic Publishing 2021), p. 121.

and *Cit of Advaita Vedanta*, whereas the concept of *Ananda*, meaning bliss, is highly enriched by Vivekananda as love. He believes that religious urges and human demands and satisfaction can be met only by a personal God, he believed that the absolute and God is one, but because of human ignorance and limited apprehension distinction comes. Metaphysically, reality is absolute *Brahman*. The God who is real and supreme is the object of human devotion and worship, He is everywhere and in everything, He controls the universe, He is the reality, is in the nature.

The core of Vivekananda's philosophy as in the *Vedanta* is that the whole universe is one in the self that is called *Brahman*. *Isvara* is the creator, supporter and destroyer of the universe and its destiny. Whereas the *Vedantic Brahman* that Vivekananda acknowledged is not the absolute of Hegel or the *Sunya* of the *Madhyamikas* or the *Alayavijnana* of the *Yogacaras*, it resembles the *Tathata*.[6]

> The absolute metaphysical is the God of religion. From the religious point of view, *Brahman* has been called *Isvara*. *Jiva* is the *Atman* in material and mental bondage. This bondage is due to karma which determines the birth.[7]

According to Vivekananda, self is beyond the mind and intellect, human beings are finite-infinite, the self is *Brahman*. He expresses the infinite in the human body; this has been a fundamental principle of all the mysticism of the world. Vivekananda says:

> Man's free agency is not of the mind, for that is bound. There is no freedom there. Man is not mind, he is soul. The soul is ever free, boundless, and eternal. Herein is man's freedom, in the soul. The soul is always free, but the mind identifies itself with its own ephemeral waves, loses sight of the soul and becomes lost in the maze of time, space, and causation-*Maya*. . . Man's free agency is established in the soul, and the soul, realising itself to be free, is always asserting the fact in spite of the mind's bondage: I am free! I am what I am! I am what I am! This is our freedom.[8]

Moksha means deliverance, it is the goal of life, because *Moksha* delivers us from all worldly as well as eternal pains and sufferings, it is the place devoid of all sufferings, pure bliss, deliverance from the cycle of rebirth, achievement worldly welfare and it

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[6] V. P. Verma, *Moden Indian Political Thought,* (Agra: Laxmi Narain Agarwal, 1971), p. 9.
[7] R. N. Sharma, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy,* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1991), p. 61.
[8] Swami Nikhilananda, *Op. cit, Vol. VI,* p. 43.

is the place of unity of the *Atman* with *Brahman*. This is the highest and absolute aim; realization of the ultimate reality. Whereas all other aims are relative, moksha is the ultimate end. This is the identity of *Atman* and *Brahman*. The greatest truths are forgotten due to their simplicity and their universal applicability, thus truths are always simple whereas complications arise due to human ignorance and ignorance is the cause of bondage, bondage is the cause of sufferings, only through the realisation of the original truth of the identity of *Atman* and *Brahman*, one will be freed from bondage.

There is some power beyond the physical body which never dies, it is absolute and the universe depends on it. If a person gets rid of impurity and optimism, then he can achieve success. Meditation, yoga, prayer, charitable works, pilgrimages, personal sacrifices and mortifications are the methods through which one can control the impure thoughts and attain salvation. For that self-purification, self-realization or self-enlightenment is a must. Self-realization reveals a new vision and understanding, frees from worries and fear, which gives smooth relationship, inner peace and fulfilment of our worldly responsibilities. Thus spiritual realization is religion for Vivekananda. Many sages have come into the world with different spirituality that leads towards creator, their followers call them *Guru* and Lord. For Vivekananda human nature is already divine, and the divinity is hidden in him, that is the essence of religion.

Religion does have a value and significance for the individual and thus has social content. Vivekananda thinks that religion provides a secure foundation, and ultimate sanction for morality, when we are benefitted, a question comes, why should it be beneficial? There is an ideal and the ideal must be universal, otherwise it is not ethics, as the ethics of one group conflicts with those of another group. Religion should provide the universal ideal and justify ethics based on the oneness and unity of everything. Thus Religion is the most prominent thought of human life, aspect of love to humanity, yet has caused the most devilry and hatred. The higher the object of any religion and its organization the more remarkable are its activities. It is obvious that in many cases the bonds of religion have proved more effective than the bond of race and climate, the person who worship the same God, believe in the same religion are strongly united with each other.

All religions have a supernatural content; the supernatural gives uniqueness and distinguishes it from all other forms of intellectual discipline. The content may be a personal God or an absolute being; these components are the objects of religious aspiration and represent the core of religion. Thus religions make efforts to transcend the human limitations of our senses and the power of reasoning. It is only going beyond these that he comes face to face with the absolute, thus religion is described as trans-empirical and trans-rational. Sciences cannot prove religious facts, because they are abstractions, the abstract personality is called God as a moral law or the ideal unity. Therefore Vivekananda, the fact stands out from all these different religions, that shows there is an ideal abstract component that is either in the form of a personal or an impersonal being, or an essence. Hence it is clear that religion awakes spirituality or realization of Divinity in human beings. This produces in him consciousness of his own limitation and imperfection, and he starts to learn some supernatural component, this is religion for him.

Leaders of diverse religions have attempted in their own way to reconcile religious diversity and to formulate a harmonious religious creed to call all religions under one umbrella together in love. They have failed in their mission of peace and love because their aim was to defend their dogmas according to their denomination; they did not adopt a well-designed plan for a religion. Vivekananda too has a plan; he is not certain whether it would be accepted or not, he presents it to the group for discussion as follows:

> In the first place I would ask mankind to recognize this maxim, 'Do not destroy.' Iconoclastic reformers do no good to the world. Break not, pull not anything down, but build. Help, if you can; if you cannot, fold your hands and stand by and see things go on. Do not injure, if you cannot render help. Say not a word against any man's convictions so far as they are sincere. Secondly, take man where he stands, and from there give him a lift. If it be true that God is the centre of all religions, and that each of us is moving towards Him along one of these radii, then it is certain that all of us must reach that centre. And at the center, where all the radii meet, all our difference will cease, but until we reach there, differences there must be.[9]

All of these radii/spokes cover the same distance, whichever lines we travel we shall reach the centre, each of us is growing according to his own nature, as the time

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[9] Swami Tattwavidananda (ed.), *Selections from the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2015), pp. 164-165.

comes each of us will come to know the highest truth. In this case we cannot teach even a child because child teaches himself, our duty is to afford the opportunity and to remove the obstacles and let him grow by himself, not to destroy him, give him all the ideas that you have and make him a spiritual person. There is no other teacher than your own soul. In society so many human natures and varieties of minds and inclinations, we can characterize into four classes, i) active man, who has the energy to work and to build hospitals and charitable deeds, ii) emotional man who loves the beauty to an excessive side of nature, and adores the God of love, the prophets of religions and the incarnation of God on earth, and does not care that Christ and Buddha existed. He cares for their personalities and their lovable figures. Such is his ideal and this is way the emotional man loves. iii) The mystics who want to analyse self to know the human mind, how to know to manipulate and obtain control over them, this is the mystical mind, and iv) the philosophical mind who wants to weigh everything and use the human intellect over it. Here Vivekananda says that what should be propagated is a religion that will be equally accepted by all minds; it should be equally philosophical, emotional, mystical and equally conducive to action.[10]

Thus, for Vivekananda the ideal of a perfect man harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is the ideal of religion.

> To the worker, it is union between men and the whole of humanity; to the mystic, between his lower and Higher Self; to the lover, union between himself and the God of Love; and to the philosopher, it is the union of all existence. This is what is meant by Yoga.[11]

There are various religious organizations in the world which have their own different codes and beliefs; there have been conflicts and disputes, each claiming that its own doctrine, spirituality and organizations are superior to those of the other religions. Despite these bitter conflicts, the major religious sects yet continued to live and flourish over the world and became models of peace loving community. For Vivekananda this fact is significant, the conflicts are only apparent not affecting the inner vitality and essence of religion. If all think in the same manner there remains actually nothing to be thought. It is the clashes of ideas and beliefs, the distinctions of

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[10] Ibid, pp. 165-166.
[11] Ibid, p. 167

thought that awakes thought, whenever there is variety of concepts, there comes the concept of a universal religion.

Vivekananda believes that the universal religions already exist in the universe, but some of us fail to see its presence, because of external and internal conflicts we fail to notice or identify the presence of the ideal and universal religion. He is aware that it is a difficult and impossible task, because every religion has different qualities and there is no common element. Vivekananda affirms that the natures of different religions will show that in fact they are not contradictory but supplement each other, religious truth is so comprehensive that varied religions abbreviate only one chosen aspect of religion strongly, there are many aspects, but in fact each religion takes up one aspect of religion and develops it. Thus every religion is adding variety to that religion, adding to the growth of religion in its own way, thus for Vivekananda man never develop from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lesser truth to higher truth. However, Vivekananda wishes to make clear that, there may be contradictory points of view of the same thing.

Unity in diversity and universal brotherhood is the plan of the universe; we are human being and bound to be distinct from each other. I am a human being, yet I have different nature from woman, yet as human beings we are one in the universe, human beings are separate from animals but as living beings, man, woman, animal are all part of one existing plan, thus we all are one with the whole universe in Him we all are one but the manifestation the differences always remain, there is not one set of doctrines but many, all faces will never be the same. Thus one cannot think about a universal mythology or a universal ritual that will never exist. If it ever exists then the world would be destroyed, because variety is the first principle of human life and differences make us human, thus perfect balance would be the human destruction. We cannot think alike, otherwise there is no thought to be discoursed, and we will be like Egyptian mummies in a museum, look at each other without view and communication.[12]

Universal religion doesn't mean that there should be one universal philosophy, one mythology, or one universal ritual, they may differ from person to person, religion to religion, yet there remains the universal religion. The universal religion may consist

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[12] Swami Vivekananda, *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. II, p. 384.

in recognising that there may be various ways of approach to the religious object and the universal truth. Universal religion gives perfect liberty to the faithful, it gives respect and positive acceptance to others, therefore Vivekananda says that he can worship in any form with any individual or sect, he can offer his prayers in anywhere, in the Church or in a Mosque or in temple or any other place of worship. One who believes in the universal religion should be broad minded, open hearted; he should be ready to learn from all the religious scriptures and should be open hearted for the future. God is the centre object of all religion. It may be different or similar in a particular sense e.g., man and woman are different but they are alike as human beings. As living beings, men animals and plants are all one; in the same way different religions talk of different aspects of the same truth. They all are one, the truth is God and in God we all are one. Here the word God is being used in comprehensive sense as the ultimate unity of the universe. Every religion is struggling towards the realisation of God. Universal religion should be acceptable by all the human minds. For Vivekananda universal religion must harmoniously balance all the aspects of religions i.e. philosophy, emotion, works and mysticism. Today the universe needs a combination of the great heart with the infinite knowledge. Vedanta gives three attribute to God i.e., infinite existence, infinite knowledge and infinite bliss, these three are in one, in the universe we want harmony of existence, knowledge and bliss infinite, that is the human ultimate goal to achieve in life.

II. Rabindranath Tagore's Concept of Ultimate reality:

Tagore was born on 8th May 1861 and brought up in an environment of revolutions in culture and religion along with politics that marked the times in colonial India. Maharishi Debendranath Tagore and Sharada Devi were the parents of Tagore. Debendranath was an original thinker, philosopher, a man of honesty, integrity and determination, he was an ardent follower of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who formulated *Brahmo Samaj,* on the basis of Hinduism and Christianity; he gave up all forms of idolatry, opposed discrimination and was a believer in the invisible God of the *Upanishads.*[13]

Each experience found form in Rabindranath's creative writing - poems, letters, short stories, essays, drama. As a painter, a patriot, a philosopher, a novelist, an

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[13] Ali S. Farzana, *Rabindranath Tagore: His Philosophy and Art,* (Nagpur, Dattsons, 2017), pp. 1-2.

educationist, a singer, he gave varied expression to his beliefs and his feelings. Tagore expresses his views on religion in the following words:

> I have already made the confession that my religion is a poet's religion. All that I feel about it is from vision and not from knowledge; frankly I acknowledge that I cannot satisfactorily answer any question about evil or about what happens after death. Nevertheless, I am sure that there have come moments in my own experience when my soul has touched the infinite and has become infinitely conscious of it through the illumination of joy.[14]

His philosophy is a peculiar and a religious synthesis of abstract monism and Theism, for him reality is one and he identifies this reality with a personal God, which gives an interesting result. Hence we could say that Tagore could be an idealist, spiritualist, monist and a theist yet he was not a systematic philosopher and could not attempt to write a systematic treatise on philosophy or on education, thus the gems and the pearls of his philosophical thoughts are scattered all over his literary works and poems. On the same, Radhakrishnan opines:

> We do not find any systematic exposition of his philosophy of life in any of his writings. Even, *Sadhana* is a book of sermons or mystic hymns or perhaps meditations…though poetry is not philosophy; it is possible for us to derive from Rabindranath's works his philosophy.[15]

Tagore admits this, but he was convinced that poetry falls within the scope of a philosopher, when the reason is illumined into a vision; through his poetry he communicates his vision of reality. His ideas are complex and original, he tried to develop a spiritual humanism which Connected Indian ancient philosophical ideas with Western thought and gave his origin. He believed that human beings can fulfill themselves through love, knowledge and find freedom through connecting self with the universal reality.

The *Vaisnava* conception of beauty has been assimilated by the poet; beauty and love form the keynote of Tagore's writings and most of his lyrics embody both beauty and love, while considering the music of *Vaisnava* the poet approves a song of *'Jnanadas'* to the deity of the beauty of the whole world is a flute. Upanishads signify listening to the mystical doctrines of guru; the mystical wisdom includes philosophical discussion

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[14] Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, (Mansfield Centre: Martino Publishing, 2013), p. 107.
[15] Jana Nath Manindra, *Education for Life, Tagore and Modern Thinkers*, (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Limited, 1984), p. 7.

of concepts that is salvation (*mukti*) the ultimate reality (*Brahman*). The aim of Tagore's philosophy is to know how the human being can reach its potential. He believed that God has aspects of monotheistic person, as well as *Brahman* that is the supreme reality.

According to Tagore, through the evolution rational and irrational animals emerged on the earth, among them human beings are freer than any other beings of the earth; because of their intellectual senses they have opportunity and responsibility to imagine and to create tools for protection and self-defense and ways to procure food. Human beings use their mental abilities for life necessities and trying to prove that they are not a mere loving catalogue of endless wants but there is a sense of perfection, a sense of unity, and harmony in their situation. Tagore calls it beyond the state i.e., righteousness, truth, religion and prosperity; human beings are longing for freedom and fulfillment, but how can human beings find that real freedom and fulfillment, what is that true freedom he speaks about? For him there are various kinds of freedom, no one can ever get that total freedom, fulfillment and satisfaction. Thus for Tagore one can never reach the end: freedom and satisfaction cannot be found in the materialistic universe, he was convinced.

Human beings are finite, therefore there is emptiness in human beings, thus we need to free ourselves from the *shackles* of self, but not from the self itself. For the fulfillment and for liberating ourselves, unity with the infinite through the individual self is essential. Thus we need to recognize *Brahman* and express his vision, formulate higher ideals and connect with the world emotionally and spiritually, thus the goal of freedom could be achieved. Tagore illustrates with the example of a lamp. If a lamp accumulates its oil and does not sacrifice it, it may not fulfill its purpose.

If we accumulate our goodness, we will remain in darkness and we may suffer, thus we need to share our oil to light the lamp and it will build up our relation with the universe to bring harmony and peace in the world, as well human being should commit themselves to the up-liftmen of the universe, thus there would be dialogue of peace, harmony and co-existence. Tagore's spirituality is centered in and on the human beings, who find fulfillment and freedom as they overcome their narrow self. Tagore's philosophy may be called 'spiritual humanism'. The superiority of the self could be realized through knowledge, through creative work and through love.

For Tagore love is the supreme path since love is a symbol for unity, harmony and peaceful living, love achieves a harmony between the opponents. Thus for Tagore love is *integrated essence* and a *unique state of being*. Loving and the loved are connected, yet separate; there is unity and difference also, Tagore identifies love for God, for human beings and for the nature, these are the abstract yet it is personal, first it is to be connected to those nearer to us and then to the world, in the same way he uses the word for joy and the other name for joy is love, the lover seeks his partner, the joy that creates the separation through obstacles of union. Knowledge has the potential to free the human mind from various domains and lead human beings to the truth. Gita refers to self-knowledge, but Tagore goes beyond to the infinity, Tagore's science set free the human mind and liberates him from all the bondages. Action (*Karma)* can lead us to fulfillment when it is not motivated by want and when one is ready to give up the fruit of our actions as the *Bhagavad Gita* says.

The true sacrifice becomes joy and charts the path to unity with Brahma, Tagore doesn't define religion, for him religion doesn't mean a body of written doctrines or theological principles; religion is neither idleness nor tranquility or the enjoyment of languid beauty but it is the direct message of spiritual reality. The impact on his mind of the *Upanishad* and the Buddhist teaching, were things of the spirit, endowed with boundless vital growth.[16] He developed a monotheistic religious belief which was based on the *Upanishad* philosophy and the immanence of God reflected in the *Upanishads* i.e., *Brahman* is the supreme reality that manifests in and through the finite being through the nature. For him the first realization was through his feeling of intimacy with nature, he assumes that the self cannot be found in its separateness from God, but in the realization of yoga of union, thus he accepts the three yogas of the Gita as the way to the realization of the Supreme Being. The karma yoga of the Gita is the way to be one with the infinite activity by the practice of disinterested goodness; Tagore's idea may be traced to Gita's supreme person. *Purushothama* is above the average person. *Purushothama* enters into the universe; since he is the *Iswasra*, he is within and beyond the world, thus he exists in the hearts of all the human beings. *Purushothama* is not separate from the universe and the human beings, he is with the creation. For Tagore, God is the immanent spirit controlling and guiding the universe, in every form of life, God manifests in human beings and all

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[16] R.N. Sharma, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, (New Delhi: Atlantic Publication, 1991), p. 246.

objects of the nature, beauty, animal, children and so on and love that illuminates his consciousness of reality.

Thus, for Tagore true religion is the realization of one's own relation with everything; one has to cultivate a universal feeling of love, not to run away from the world. The true religion should not be confused with institutional religion as the forms and the ways in which these religions are practiced, mislead the faithful. The true religion promulgates freedom, has the quality of spontaneity and neutrality in it, there should not be any compulsion in it, or any fixed limited set around it, and should be free and spontaneous in every individual. In the dogmatic religion all questions are answered and doubts are laid to rest, whereas for Tagore religion is fluid, like air around the universe, there is no solid conclusion, it has no walls around itself. *Dharma* is the inmost nature and the essence, the absolute truth of everything, for example when a tree begins to take shape one can know its dharma in the same way the human beings religion is his inmost truth. For Tagore the religion of man is the spontaneous reflection of the essential and inner expression of human being, man has the capacity of self-transcendence, he has a self-awareness that reveals a capacity of going beyond himself, which is pushing him ahead towards higher and higher regions which is greater than his material sense. It is creative force that is his religion, whereas the religious organizations make slaves of their own institutions. He says:

> It should be remembered that religions or churches of religious organizations are not the same. They are to one another as the fire is to the ashes. When the religions have to make way for religious organization it is like the river being dominated by sand beds, the current stagnates and its aspect becomes desert-like.[17]

Religion is a sort of homesickness, like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day to their mountain nests, a religious man is on his voyage to his eternal home. According to Tagore human effort is to assimilate his identity to become a super-human being, the infinite in human is an expression of the infinite in the superman. The actual religion seeks the unity of the two, the finite is limited whereas infinite is unlimited, and possesses negative as well as positive characteristics. The negative concept of the infinite is an indefinite extension of the limits of things, it is an eternal of infinitude, whereas positive characteristic of infinite is in Adventism, in the

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[17] Rabindranath Tagore, *A letter, The Modern Review,* September 1917, p. 335.

absolute unity, in which comprehension of the multitude is not as in an outer receptacle but as in an inner perfection that permeates and exceeds its contents.

The accurate relation between the finite and the infinite is the wide problem that has been the query all through the ages, and seers have been attempting answers; "Me seems, there is only one grand tune of all my compositions and it may adequately be styled as the union of the Infinite with the finite in finiteness."[18]

According to Tagore, universe is a mine of infinite sorrow and pain. He invites them to heart which is all alone. In the *Sandhya-Sangit* he treats nature as separate from man and he sets up a barrier between Human beings. Thus this separation leads to his vision of sorrows and disappointments. After *Sandhya-Sangit* comes *Prabhat-Sangit*.[19] Here there is a hint of salvation, out of Dark Ocean of pain and sorrow, the poet sings: *My heart is open and the entire universe flows into it.* In *Sonari Tari,* for the first time in his life, the poet performs, that he is not unreal and his musical note is not grim despair, he sees that the eternal person is the conductor of life-channel of individuals, the poem proclaimed *Visva-Nrtya*, the abominable leading the integral cosmic account through trials and afflictions, pains and evils towards an eternal goal. In *Citra* the poet gets the appearance of a real, the long desired *Jivan-Devata* that is the only hope and wish of the poet's soul, he realizes the values of finiteness, to him humanity is a meaningful part of the cosmic order.

Tagore's philosophy starts at once from the Absolute to finite and at the very outset he emphasizes the finite to infinite nature of the finite individual. He loved finite universe with its varieties of musical sounds and appearance; he loved human beings and human-values in harmony with eternal, he does not want to die and leave this beautiful world, but would like to live in amidst of human beings and enjoy the creation of the Absolute to its fullest.[20] Tagore speaks on the *Upanisadic* teaching that reality is one, non-dual, he quotes the contents of the *Upanisadic* texts and believes in the Oneness with the Reality. Thus there is One, but from the One springs up many, *Ekamevadvitiyam,*[21] this became the content and the theme of his belief.

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[18] Benoy Gopal Ray, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, (Calcutta: Progressive Publication, 1970), p.18
[19] Ibid, p. 21
[20] Ibid, p. 22
[21] Ibid, p, 25

The religious belief of human being is above all the limitation of various religious conservative 'isms', denotes Tagore's humanism and establishes a perfect synthesis of ideas between God and man and the unity of divine humanity, through this realization of human nature he tries to relate with the other human beings, this unity finally forms a unity between individual man and universal man, Tagore observes God is manava Brahma, Ultimate religion of human being could be realized through the human persona's identity.[22] Tagore observes that the Ultimate Reality can be known only through human personality. Thus the poet acknowledges man as the representative of the universal spirit and the realization of this spirit in him and human is united with the universal Reality that is God. The realization of universal or eternal sprit in human being is the achievement of God in him, this idea of God in the observation of Tagore is the surface of highest of human goodness.

In *Jivan-devata* Tagore communicates personal and impersonal features of Reality, in love there are these aspects of communication; sometimes it is manifested in man and nature, also it is distinct and supreme ideals that are to be realised by man. Together with nature and Absolute *Jivan-devata* showers its love on man, but as the human beings object of love is not two as *Jivan-devata,* being Absolute and perfect being, immanent and transcendent. Nature takes human as the object of love that means *Jevan-devta*, is immanent in nature and identical. He creates human beings and nature from his own self-manifestation. God, nature and man are the essential requirements of Tagore's religion of man.

As with the developing idea of *Jivan-devata* Tagore often lapses into the ideas of absolutism, Dasgupta and Radhakrishnan consider him as the absolutist, referring to the personal aspect of God the theistic element in the ideal of *Jivan-devata* whereas some called him a theist. On careful examination of Tagore's philosophical speculation of the religion of man, we find that in the development of the concepts, Tagore unites theism and absolutism; he synthesizes personal and impersonal aspects of God. In support of this synthesis Indian contemporary philosophers such as Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi and Radhakrishnan accept both the theistic and absolutistic aspects of God as real and evolving synthetic system of philosophy. They develop different synthetic systems of philosophical thought in the

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[22] Rabindranath Tagore, *Manuser Dharma, Vol. XII, Rabindraracanavali*, (W. Bengal: Cent Edn. 1960), p. 584.

aspect of the infinite on the basis of a perfect unity of the absolute and the theistic aspects of God which also is present in Rabindranath.

Tagore's *Jivan-devata* springs up from the concept of universal concept of God the Ultimate creator that belongs to all that express whole humanity. Tagore viewed *Jivan-devata* as originating in his personal experiences and senses, his infinite and eternal communication through his childhood with his inner god and inner being. The *Jivan-devata* includes his whole self, he has been profoundly awake to the love that He has for him. It is the deeper self within the recesses of each other; it indicates a complete unification of identities of selves and the divinity of innermost lord of his life.

The poet independently and consciously transformed to the inner being, the relation between ego and his alter ego. Tagore's inner god has been seen in his poems and his songs, where he is able to exceed his daily feeling and beliefs of his life may merge himself with in a gardener of *Jivan-devata. Jivan-devata* is not to be determined by any one gender, there seems to be a great felicity in the approach from one gender to another. The poet and the creators of those works or the Jivan devta speak to us in both voices the genders keep modifying from become to becoming.[23]

The idea of the divinity and humanity of man and God demonstrated in Tagore's *Religion of man* instructed through the concept of *Jivan-devata*, he finds his religion that is infinite. Through the intimate relation with God, man becomes divine and affirms the unity the Supreme, thus Tagore's concept of *Jivan-devata*, the eternal, the stimulator and exciter of human life is treated as Lord of life. Tagore accepts the innermost spirit that is developed in his life in different forms; he interprets differently i.e. *Jiven-devata, Manasa Sundari, Abhisarika, Manasi* and so on. Tagore proceeds towards divinity and his idea of God in the form *Jivan-devata* appears before him either as individual man or universal Supreme person. Tagore realized the creative power or *Jivan-devata* through life related nature and the world, for some philosophers the concept of pantheism aims of God is immanent in human world, whereas Tagore's concept of *Jivan-devata* being a creative spirit, is immanent in man and world, also in transcending the limitations and creation of life feeling gradually developed and establishes an unity with the external world, likewise Tagore towards

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[23] Kumkum Bhattacharya, "Jivan Devata: Quest for Interpretations," *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research,* Vol. 28, No. 1, 2011, pp. 158-159

the end of his journey realizes the universal form of *Jivan-devata* where the Lord of Tagore's life appears as personal.

To become infinite is a distinct count, infinite is manifested in human life and becomes infinite through the realization of absolute value in human life, the development of concept of love and service to others is the realization of Absolute, the installation of human being is the factor of Tagore's *The Religion of man*, which is the reflection on human being as the realization of Universal human being in the finite life that is to become infinite. *Jivan-devata*, the infinite God, comes to human lives in various levels and forms and thus human being recognize the true Jivan-*devata*. In *The Religion of Man,* Tagore states that the significant aim of human life is to become infinite and the absolute concept of love for humanity is the fundamental end of Tagore's religion of man: thus realization of God in the form of *Jivan-devata* is not the experience of Absolute value in the ordinary sense of religious belief but it is the realization of Absolute as the supreme value of unity of truth, beauty and goodness in different levels of life through that human being becomes Absolute and may overcome his restrictions.

In Tagore's meditation he explains the *humanity of God,* where the infinite turns into a perfect human beings and simultaneously human being also becomes the infinite that Tagore calls *Manavabrahma* that is the realization of absolute or infinite spirit in the human. Thus According to Tagore's concept of *Soaham* or *I am He*, through the providential manifestation in his human life, infinite become human and human become divine or infinite. This manifestation of God in human being affirms the significant concept of God. Tagore interprets the personal identity of the Absolute as he observes the infinite concept is manifested through human life in various levels in human forms.

III. Gandhi's Concept of Ultimate Reality:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2nd October 1869 at Porbandar, Gujarat. He was sent to Alfred High School at Rajkot[24] and later to England for legal studies where he came to acquaint himself with good and great things of the West. After attaining a Barrister-at-Law degree in 1891, he returned to India and then went to

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[24] B.R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi A Biography*, (New Delhi: Oxford University, 1996), p.15.

South Africa where his experience of the racial discrimination committed by the white people changed his entire life. Against this background Gandhi started his moral experiments of conquering evil by love and defying immoral laws, and here he started to practice his moral and religious ideas. As he came back to India he started the Indian independence movement by removing social evils such as untouchability and social disparity through the means of non-violence.

Gandhi believed in the non-duality (*Advaita*) with regard to the notion of the ultimate Reality. However, he remained a theist, a firm believer in God. In the early years he was more persuaded by the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas than that composed by Valmiki. Gita had the most determinative influence on him as he saw the instruction of truth, non-violence and ethics in the stories of *Gita*. He believed that the *Bhagavad Gita* is the guide of light to reconcile the conflict between salvation and earthly life. He did not accept Hindu scriptures in totality and kept rejecting the errors, exaggerations and the unethical and accepted *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, Gita and the *Puranas* as they appealed to his rationality. Vedas are not the only divinely inspired scriptures, as he stated that The Bible, Quran, Zoroastrianism are also inspired texts of God.[25] Thus he says:

> All religions have one goal but they suggest varied ways to reach to this common goal. Their moral codes are based on common principles. My moral religion contains all those rules when they encompass entire humanity.[26]

Thus the inspiration of Gandhi could be traced to Christianity, Jain-Buddhist philosophy, Islam, and the philosophers like Thoreau, Ruskin and Tolstoy. Christianity left a significant influence on his ideas. He had great respect for Jesus Christ whom he integrates in his thoughts, he writes:

> The Holy Bible to me is a scripture very much like Gita and Quran. Sermon on the Mount stirred my heart and I used these lines in practice of my life philosophy. Win evil by good. If someone slaps on one cheek put the other one in front. Give love to your enemy let him harm you. You keep helping him; if he is hungry offer him food. If he is thirsty, quench his thirst. He learnt this from the Lord Jesus 'Oh God! Forgive them; they know not what they are doing.[27]

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[25] B. M. Sharma, *Mahatma Gandhi and His Philosophy,* (New Delhi: Rawat Publication, 2017), p. 9.
[26] Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi*, (London: National Yiddish Book Centre, 1924), p. 28.
[27] Ibid, pp. 9-10.

Besides the Bible Gandhi read Christian literature, He was also influenced by John Ruskin's *Unto this Last,* which changed his conceptual system of life philosophy; he convinced him of the discipline of labour, inspired his belief procedure and brought constructive transformation in his being. He translated Ruskin's '*Unto this Last'* into Gujarati *Sarvodaya*. Thoreau, the American thinker, suggested to him the idea of civil disobedience and non-cooperation and stateless society. The concept of social good was installed in his mind by these philosophies. Tolstoy gave a new dimension to Christianity through his *"The Kingdom of God is within you."* His emphasis on the power and dignity of suffering gave Gandhi an inspiration to develop his notion of Satyagraha. Violence cannot contribute to the growth of human life and virtues.

Gandhi's concept of Truth is based on *Satyagraha*. It is a Sanskrit term meaning the adherence to Truth in all matters, it is also called truth-force, Soul-force or love force. Whereas violence is the negation of this great spiritual force that could be inculcated by those who will entirely avoid violence. The social, economic and political ramification affects human relations, it creates tensions and is cause for the communal violence in human society; all humans' beings are brothers and sisters since they are partakers of the same reality and share the same *Atman*. We have many bodies but one soul (atman), the sun rays are many through the refraction, yet they have the same source.[28]

Thus for Gandhi *Sataya* is the foundation of his philosophy based on love, it is a component of religious belief that there is one God, the creator, and He resides in every one of us, unless one has basic of love for humanity he cannot practice the technique of Satyagraha. Gandhi's whole life may be well interpreted to live in his autobiography, *The Story of my Experiment with Truth.* His adherents justify that he was basically a practical person, there was no reference to metaphysics and philosophical speculation, nevertheless he was clear whenever he meant the Truth, and he attempted to explain what he meant by Truth, although he was not involved in metaphysical speculation. He is not a neutral observer who learns to define Truth and then applies it to different aspects of life.[29]

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[28] Glyn Richards, *The Philosophy of Gandhi*, (London & Dublin: Curzon Press, Barnes & Noble Books, 1982), p. 64.

[29] Ibid, p.1

Gandhi was a traditional orthodox ancient follower of Hinduism, his truth is not dogmatic and rigid but it showed flexible views, because for him truth and search of truth must remain open and changeable. His arguing on truth is not dogmatically fixed and cannot be continually sought. The world's religions are competing with each other and claiming to have a monopoly of truth whereas for Gandhi, a sign that one has lost touch with truth is the claim that one's own group has an exclusive claim on it.

> When he affirms the isomorphism of Truth (*Satya*) and Reality (*Sat*), he refers to reality as Truth and by use of the term he preserves the metaphysical and ethical connotation of such traditional Hindu terms as dharma, universal law or duty, and *rta*, the cosmic moral law. For him nothing is, or nothing exists, except truth, and where Truth is there also is true knowledge, (*cit*), and where true knowledge is, there also is bliss (*ananda*). Truth then is *Saccidananda*, being, consciousness, bliss.[30]

For Gandhi, God is *Truth*. Truth doesn't take any shape or form, but when it meets a particular human need it is called *Isvara* or God that assumes a personal implication, and everything else is momentary.[31] Thus according to Gandhi God is not personal, but intensity, as the essence of life, as pure undefiled consciousness, as truth, goodness, light and love. He sees God as the unseen power entering in all things and the accumulation of life, indescribable, formless and nameless, impersonal Absolute or ultimate; thus his concept of God is God as formless Truth.[32]

For Gandhi there is no conflict whether the devotee conceives God in personal terms or impersonal, since the one class of faithful is not inferior to the other, he accepts that God is all things to all men. This enables the Dualist and *Visista-dvaitin* or qualified non-Dualist to maintain his own preference for *Advaita*/non-Dualism. His acceptance of the dogma of "manyness" as reality thus probably means that reality can be conceived of in various ways which accept the non-creative aspect of God proposed by Jains and the creative aspect of God proposed by Ramanuja, the founder of the *Visista-dvaita*. This tolerant attitude gave rise to *Anekantavada* or belief in many doctrines or dogmas.[33] His aim is to describe God in the same context as an

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[30] Ibid, p. 1
[31] Shriman Narayan, *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* vol. VI*,* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1968), p. 97.
[32] Ibid, p. 382
[33] Glyn Richards, *Op. Cit.*, p. 3.

impersonal force and the essence of life is also omniscient, omnipotent and benevolent.[34] Thus Gandhi without any difficulty moves from impersonal to personal description of God, he expresses it thus:

> When he moves from the concept of impersonal truth to the concept of a personal God, he is distinguishing, in traditional Advaitin fashion, between higher and lower levels of truth or reality.[35]

Thus for Gandhi there are lower and higher levels of knowledge, there is no superiority in conceiving God in impersonal or personal terms, thus it is quite difficult to see how the traditional distinction between higher and lower level of Truth could be applied to him.

Gandhi refers to God by the names of Rama and Krishna, the Hindu names of god. *Ahuramazda* is the Zoroastrian name for the god of light, these are the personal names for god, and the personal connotation of these names is a mysterious and invincible force which pervades all things. During his childhood Gandhi was taught to repeat the thousand names of god, those names of god were not complete, hence for him god is beyond these thousand names, means God has no name and no form, thus the idea of God, the infinite, is beyond human definition, description and imagination, thus it is, as stated: "*Brahman, neti, neti*, not this, not this."[36]

For Gandhi, all the names or forms attributed to the inexpressible are symbols and efforts to individualise God for the same, the ultimate to be conveyed through the symbols, personalized form and images is regarded as the part of the human desire for symbolic worship. The incarnation of the ultimate reality i.e., Rama and Krishna is the human symbol of God the Almighty, craving for the unseen power that is not necessarily a need of another. Gandhi has accepted all the names and attributed to God, as symbolic implies one formless omnipresent Rama, to him thus Rama is the all-powerful essence whose name, carved in the heart, removes all suffering, mental and physical. On one occasion a Roman Catholic priest indicated to Gandhi that if Hinduism becomes monotheistic, Christianity and Hinduism could serve India in co-operation, Gandhi replied:

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[34] Shriman Narayan, Op. cit., p.100
[35] Glyn Richards, *Op. Cit*, p. 3.
[36] Ibid, p. 5

> Hindus are not polytheistic. While it is undoubtedly true that Hindus say there are many gods they also declare that there is but one God, *Iswara*, *Devadhideva*, who is God of gods. Gandhi himself professed to be a thorough Hindu yet not a believer of many gods.[37]

For Gandhi idol worship is the symbolic representation of the Almighty God, thus it is human necessity for his living in the universe. Gandhi believes that the Hindus are not worshipping idols which are made out of stone or metals but it is God who has been symbolized or represented in those forms, if the believer were to make a fetish /idol of his stone or metal image, that could be interpreted as idolatry, but an attitude has to be identified from the component of holiness that the faithful attribute to temples, Churches, and mosques or to their holy scripture that is *The Bible*, *the Koran* or *the Gita.* The stone which Gandhi mentioned is the symbol of God, rather than an incarnation of God and it has a component of sanctities. Gandhi means this when he expresses that God resides in the stone in a special way or the stone partakes of the nature of that which it represents.[38] Likewise Gandhi refutes the charges of idolatry and responds to them saying:

> Every Hindu child knows that the stone in the famous temple in Banaras is not Kashi Vishwanath. But he believes that the Lord of the Universe does reside specially in that stone.[39]

Hence Gandhi and Paul Tillich share some similar views: Gandhi's concept of Truth concerning the symbolic nature of personification of the Truth in a variety of different forms agrees to what Tillich says about the symbolic nature of Christian terminology. For both there is symbolic representation of the ultimate reality whether the ultimate reality is depicted as truth or as the Holy One.

For Gandhi, symbolic manifestation of human carving on stone are making an ideal for the unseen and untouchable or intangible, for Tillich the symbols are necessary because ultimate reality or the Holy could not maintain its unconditional character without them. Thus through these descriptions we see that Gandhi had a practical approach whereas Tillich had more systematic theological approach. Tillich holds that symbols in themselves cannot correspond and fully express ultimate reality, whereas for Gandhi, symbols are beyond themselves to the ultimate, at the same time partakers

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[37] Ibid, p. 5
[38] Ibid, pp. 5-6.
[39] Ibid, p. 5

of the nature, they have certain sacred or deeper dimension. They tried to open up those levels of reality but it was not a literal approach and related to the depth of human soul. According to Tillich the ultimate is not wholly contained in the symbols and there cannot be finite particularization of the ultimate or Holy, which could only result in demonization of the Holy. For Gandhi symbols are necessary for the religious life of same or other purpose, yet he insists that there is nothing inferior in conceiving God in personalized terms, and various religions may need different religious symbols. Then one religion may claim superiority over another, but these are fit only to go through rejection. In other words, Tillich says that the finite particulars are given the status significant of demonization whereas Gandhi insists that symbols that are fetishes are idolatrous and discarded. Gandhi's position points out that this reality can be conceived in various ways, all of which are equally valid.

> The manifestation of God in the Indian tradition would take such forms as Brahma, Visnu and Shiva, the *trimurti* of the Hindu way of life, and innumerable other gods and goddesses, the veneration of which in Gandhi's views is sometimes inaccurately and insensitively described as idol worship.[40]

Tillich justifies that God is filled with actual and concrete symbols in the Christian tradition in the use of man's finite experience, for example God is identified as Father, as Person, as One who acts and the one who shows love, power, concern and justice. Thus the substance of idolatry for Tillich is when these concrete, finite symbols are corresponded to the status of the Holy or Ultimate concern, this is the demonization of religion. Gandhi's primary aim is to ceaselessly analyse the truth, he had a glimpse of it but was not successful in finding the absolute truth, because he does not consider absolute Truth with particular instances of truth. Yet it does not prevent him from recognizing that particular instance of truth. In fact his chief objective is for the key to understand and interpret the Bhagavad Gita, since Bhagavad Gita for him is the call to action, whereas according to Hinduism action binds human beings to the empirical *samsaric* existing universe, the endless cycle of rebirth, death and rebirth, there should be desire-less action where there is no longing for the fruits of action if liberation is to be achieved. Gandhi calls such action as selfless, detached, sacrificial and non-violent; this action is on behalf of others or in

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[40] Ibid, p. 7

the service of others. This action maintains the Truth more clearly, these actions Gandhi associated with ahimsa, non-violence and Truth.[41] Gandhi says:

> Ahimsa is my God and truth is my God. When I look for Ahimsa, Truth says, 'Find it through me.' When I look for Truth, Ahimsa says, 'Find it through me.' It is Gandhi's contention that the only inevitable means for the attainment of Truth is ahimsa. *Ahimsa* is the means and truth the end. But since ends and means are convertible terms for Gandhi, Truth and *ahimsa* are intertwined. [42]

The means to achieve truth is *ahimsa*, for Gandhi *Ahimsa* is the means and the Truth the end, the practice of *ahimsa* necessarily leads to truth. For Gandhi our religious and ethical ideals not only inform the ends, but we aim to attain them in the search for the truth and ethical or moral questions arise by which the distinction between means and ends comes under moral scrutiny. In the categorical statement there are difficulties in the practice of Ahimsa which can never lead to Truth; it is the moral uncertainty or perplexity of human life.

On one occasion Gandhi was asked what he considers to be the truth. And he interpreted the question as to how he came to know the Truth. His reply was that the voice within tells you. It is self-evident that Gandhi refers to the voice of his conscience but the inner voice or voice of conscience is not self-evident. There are criteria by which human thinking and acting is to be judged, for Gandhi they are religious and ethical ideals of his own 'form of life'. When one speaks of his inner voice, the voice one should recognize through his limitation and discipline, his whole being sincere, humble, pure and non-violent, following poverty and non-possession. Gandhi also says that there should be a need of single-minded devotion, indifference to worldly life. He says: "If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of Truth you must reduce yourself to a zero."[43] In fact Gandhi acknowledges that his thought and ideas are above the realistic ways, he accepts that it is impossible for a mortal man to attain that perfect Truth, and also not possible to give a perfect definition of Truth, thus he pointed out that:

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[41] Ibid, p.8
[42] Ibid, p. 8
[43] Ibid, p. 10

We can only visualize it in our imagination. We cannot through the instrumentality of this ephemeral body see face to face Truth which is eternal. That is why in the last resort one must depend on faith.[44]

Through his acknowledgment of faith he interprets how he is able to view the notion of absolute Truth which he believes to be God. In the affirmation of faith, at a time he expresses that the truth is God, and he is making a confession of faith that does not require any external confirmation. Thus it is seen that he isn't giving a cosmological argument for the existence of God, since God is beyond human reasoning. Thus Gandhi accepts that human reasoning is limited but for him the proof of existence of God is established and founded on the base of faith which transcends reason, whereas the traditional *Advaita* or non-Dualism refers to the Soul (*Atman)* and God (*Brahman*). Thus for the human beings to see the absolute alone by reason is not possible. Hence the absolute Truth is known by faith, which is beyond our experience and observation rather than theories.[45] Gandhi says:

That relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler. Even my Himalayan blunders have seemed trifling to me because I have kept strictly to this path…I have gone forward according to my light. Often in my progress I have had faint glimpses of the Absolute Truth, God, and daily the conviction is growing on me that He alone is real and all else is unreal.[46]

The argument of absolute truth is the matter of faith, which could be utopian, yet through the particular illustration of truth we may come to know and understand what it could have been the absolute Truth. The relative truth conveys the meaning of absolute Truth, which we affirm in faith. According to Gandhi a relative truth for us is the lighthouse, so when we claim to have had a glimpse of absolute truth it is assumed that he has caught a glimpse of some hypostasized ultimate entity, through the participation of particular form of life, he is to live and act according to certain ethical and religious criteria and informed by the spirit that is called law *dharma*, or moral law (*rta*) or way (*tao*) which he prefers to call Truth, *satya* or God.[47] Beside humility, discipline single-minded devotion to the quest for the truth Gandhi stresses on prayer, he meant prayer leads towards God, hence for Gandhi prayer is the indispensable

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[44] Alan Drengson, *The Selected Works of Arne Naess, Vol. I,* (California: Springer Publisher, 2007), p. 46.

[45] Glyn Richards, *Op. cit*, p. 11.

[46] M. K. Gandhi, *Truth is God*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1955), p. 32.

[47] Glyn Richards, *Op. cit.,* p. 11.

perfume of religion and core of human life, it is not repetition of any empty pattern, but could be the application to the request to God, the master of the universe. In the wider sense it is communion and the heart of passion that produces peace and brings a quality of appreciating method and a system in the human day-to-day life, for Gandhi prayer is a form of meditation, whose aim is self-purification and knowledge of Truth that brings community together to the divine. Thus spiritual discipline is necessary to protect and serve human beings, and promote self-purification and internal seeking for the Truth. For Gandhi it is by means of petitionary prayer that we invoke the divinity within himself, for him petitions are really higher, self- prayer is longing of the soul and we admit our weakness. He explains: "The Deity does not need my supplication but I, a very imperfect human being, do need his protection as a child that of its father."[48] When Gandhi maintains the means of prayer he invokes the divinity within himself and he doesn't make any distinction between self or the Atman within, God or the Truth. It is believed that the teaching of Brahman, the Atman, and the soul within it is at one with the essence of the universe.

Gandhi believed the purpose of human life is to know the self that is equivalent to knowing God and the Truth. The self or the *Atman* releases from the bonds of darkness and ignorance, is one with God, this unity is realized through the prayers, bhakti and devotion that will be transformed into knowledge, therefore for Gandhi with his dying breath was not the historical or mythological Rama but the highest self as the powerful essence whose name is carved in the heart. Thus according to Gandhi, formless omnipresent Rama is the highest self which is identical with the truth.[49] Thus Christians would claim that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God the Father and the Truth has been fulfilled through Him, while on the other hand Muslims believe that the Truth has been revealed by *Allah* to Muhammad, and then which is the right truth? When different approaches come for the truth, the question arises, which is the independent criterion that decides which has the claim to the truth? How do we distinguish between the divergent truths? The earnest request to the Holy Bible could be countered with an earnest request to the Koran. If it is maintained that there is an independent criterion of truth, then we will have different approaches determining exactly what that criterion might be.

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[48] Mahatma Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme, Vol., I,* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1977), p. 73.
[49] Ibid, p. 214

Gandhi had the experience of glimpses of absolute truth and he is aware of the need to act in accordance with certain ethical, religions principles and to work accordingly. He doesn't favor any religion having a monopoly of truth; it has to be acknowledged that Gandhi's glimpses of absolute Truth came through the understanding and the traditional teaching of his own Hindu religion.

Gandhi was a man of action or a '*Karamyogi*', who believed that self-development, can resolve individual as well as human problems in the universe; he believed that religions have a common foundation that can bring the individual face to face with God. According to him nothing that opposes rationality and morality could be called religious, without it religion and moral life becomes a footpath without destination. Religion and moral law brings discipline in human life and life becomes meaningful and in other ways it becomes immortal. All religion explains the fundamental reality of life; religion is capable of controlling every aspect of life. The goal of life is self-actualization. It needs co-ordination with entire humanity.

Thus for Gandhi religion is the service of mankind and the good of all, he believed in the creative power of religion because it prescribed a moral discipline. For Gandhi, the concept of Religion resembles his notion of truth; hence the Truth and God are the genesis of Gandhian philosophy. He believed in duty and responsibility, his concept of religion rose above Hinduism, for him religion is like a tree whose branches get nourishment and energy from one source that is God.[50] Therefore different religions show us different paths, different destinations and explain different characters of the individuals, ultimately they merge at one destination and that could be called a world religion. In a prayer sermon Gandhi once said:

> I am a true Hindu, a *Sanatani* Hindu, hence I am a Muslim, a Sikh, a Parsi, a Jew, and a Christian, all these religions are the branches of a tree, which branch should I choose and which should I ignore, where should I pick my leaves or which ones should I exclude? All religions are one. If all people understand religion as I do there will be total peace and harmony in India.[51]

Gandhi was a Hindu yet had love and concerns for other religions; also he was tolerant and respectful towards other religious brethren, he said,

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[50] B. M. Sharma, Op. cit., p. 147.
[51] *Ibid,* p. 147

> My Hinduism will get insulted if I do not help or save a Muslim or Christian in distress. I must stake everything I have to save and serve people of other religions. My Hindu religion is all comprehensive. It does not support opposition to other religions. All religions are inter-connected; you can search good principles in all religions. To compare religions and hold one higher than others is petty mindedness. All religions supplement each other. No religion can or should contradict other religions. One must accept and respect all religions as his own.[52]

Gandhi accepted Hinduism because it tolerates all the religions and gives opportunities to all and appreciates the good practices of other religions. All religion also gives special respect and speaks about non-violence and regards human beings as one entity and children of God, accepting and respecting all living beings is an expression of respecting the creation of God and rebirth is seen in this perspective. In 1947, at an RSS workers' rally, Gandhi expressed his religious tolerance,

> While I am proud of being a Hindu, my Hindu religion is neither narrow nor intolerant. It is unique. A Hindu must internalize and include all good qualities of other religions. If non-Hindus cannot love with equality in India, or Muslims in Pakistan will keep the Hindus in subordination, then it will imply the end of both the religions.[53]

Since the concept of truth and God are the genesis of Gandhi's philosophy, he knew his obligations, thus religion becomes prominent in his thought, and he was not atheist or materialist. His religious belief is above his belief in Hinduism. Though he called himself a *Sanatani Vaishnava* he was a humanist, who saw the best in all religions, he came to this conviction throughout his experiment with truth and non-violence, he came to the final conclusion that the truth alone is God. He encourages people to assume the *Upanishadic* authoritative declaration *that God is the only reality and world is not real.*[54] (*Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithya*). The whole universe is the expansion of providential consciousness. It is providential reflection and Brahman includes all, and the things which are not added in it are untruth. Thus one should embrace the truth and God.

According to Gandhi true religion and true morality are impossible to separate they are bound up with each other. He would reject any religious doctrinal belief that conflicts with morality, whereas he could tolerate the unreasonable religious

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[52] Ibid, p.148
[53] Ibid, p. 148
[54] Ibid, p. 147

sentiment which is not immoral. Human beings should not be untruthful, cruel or incontinent and claim to have God in his side. There is only one factual reality of God that is truth and it is God; earnest cause of Truth is religion. Hence for him religion is devotion to some highest superpower, that the devotion to Truth/God is religion, he is speaking about the religion of the transcendent Hinduism that can change one's nature and has the potentiality to bind one indissolubly to the truth within Hindu tradition and culture and their way of life which purifies them. He understands the term Religion from its use in his form of life.[55] Thus for Gandhi religion is the verbal expression of the permanent wave of the nature of a human being, since permanent aspect is the aspect of Divinity and the essential good qualities exist in every one of us, religion purifies and elevates human nature and the true religious spirit has ability to change one's nature.

Religion can arouse in human nature a spiritual restlessness, a thirst which enables one to cultivate and develop a sense of the right and good. For Gandhi the true and perfect religious aspiration is based on a desire and a cognitive urge to know beyond the prediction and the reality within finite existence. Religion gives the feeling that the ultimate reality is the realization of God; religion involves genuine and honest love and striving for Truth. Without this all the characters would be ineffective, thus for Gandhi no religion is higher than Truth and righteousness, no particular religion can represent perfection or a monopoly of Truth. The particular Religion may convey the meaning of Religion and the particular truth, yet the particular truth does not represent the fullness of Truth. Gandhi illustrates that religions are the human expressions of that given reality, all religions act upon the truth, yet their content is not fullness of truth, has some errors. The heart of the one religion is indistinguishable from the heart of another religion.

Gandhi says:

> Even as a tree has a single trunk, but many branches and leaves, so there is one true and perfect Religion, but it becomes many, as it passes through the human medium. The one Religion is beyond all speech.[56]

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[55] Glyn Richards, Op. cit., p.17.
[56] John Hick and Lamont C. Hempel (ed.), *Gandhi's Significance for Today,* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1989), p. 103

Gandhi acknowledges that all religions are various highways to the same destination, and respond to the different human dispositions. Gandhi means that many religions are manifestations of individual and different viewpoints; there are different features of truth. He believes that a religion without morality is impossible and if it denies any of the virtues such as truth, mercy and goodness, it does not deserve to be called religion, thus religion and morality cannot be separated from each another.[57] Gandhi was in favor of humanity, calls *Sarvodaya*, through the service of humanity and accomplishment in the cause of brotherhood one may have a better understanding of Truth and God, to help the helpless and feed the hungry in which we can see the presence of God. Gandhian ideology of Sarvodaya and Truth are two sides of the same coin, since they are associated with each other, much significance could be given to particular religions which claim such interests. But he refuses to allocate superior and inferior position to religions.

Various religions are the several roads to the same destination, thus for him it does not matter if we take different roads as far as we reach the same destination, hence for Gandhi there may be as many religions as there are individuals. Thus as man reaches the heart of religion, he reaches the heart of others also. Different religions may need some distinctive symbols but no symbols should become superior over others; the superior symbols should be discarded. Gandhi believed that another believer's faith is not inferior to his own, because unlike faiths are God's creation and they are equally holy.[58] His respect and reverence towards all religions developed into the decision that: i) all religions are true, ii) all religions have error in them and iii) all religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism. Our aim of fellowship should be to help a Hindu to become a better Hindu, a Christian to be a better Christian and a Muslim to be a better Muslim, our prayer must be, God give him all the light and truth he needs for his development that he may become a better man, whatever form of religion he follows. He rejects the study of other religions that may weaken a believer's faith in his own religion, whereas he defends such studies as may lead to the extension of

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[57] Glyn Richards, *Op. cit.,* p. 20.
[58] N.K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi, Encyclopaedia of Gandhi's Thoughts* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Mudranalaya, 1950), p. 310.

one's own religion to other religions, and provide a better understanding of their belief.[59]

Here we see Gandhi is willing to accept the plurality of religious traditions and their praiseworthiness that indicates that he is with his own Hindu tradition and culture. He rejects the right of a religion to claim superiority for itself over other religions. The Scriptures of all faiths are equally inspired, though none can be regarded as literally inspired[60] Gandhi explicitly rejects the exclusive divinity of Jesus, the claim that Jesus is the only son of God, and doesn't take it literally true and he says:

> I therefore, do not take as literally true the text that Jesus is the only begotten son of God. God cannot be the exclusive Father and I cannot ascribe exclusive divinity of Jesus. He is as divine as Krishna or Rama or Mohammed or Zoroaster.[61]

He recognizes that every religion has within its depth a clue to the meaning of ultimate reality, the particular religions while not embodying the fullness of Truth are necessary to convey what it means to speak of absolute Truth or the Ultimate Concern, hence he accepts as a basic premise the truth of all world religious and acknowledges the benefit that could be derived from a sympathetic study of scriptures of different faiths. That is his supplication for the spirit of toleration between religions. He endeavors the tolerance with an element of respect, it is the basic premise the truth of all world religions and he acknowledges the goodness that could be obtained from a study of the Scriptures of different faiths.

Gandhi understands that tolerance does not blind man to the faults of a religion including his own Hinduism. It is due to the non-dogmatic and non-exclusive, that it becomes free from imperfection and weakness. To Gandhi cardinal sin is the way it tolerates untouchability, it is an ulcer a poison that pervades the whole Hindu way of life creating unnatural distinctions. Untouchability has become a part of Indian society, when it is diminished, the distinction will no longer remain and no one will consider himself superior to another.

The term 'Sarvodaya,' meaning *Universal Uplift* or *Progress of All*, was first coined by Gandhi as the title of his translation of John Ruskin's tract on political economy,

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[59] Glyn Richards, Op. cit., p. 21.

[60] Ibid., p. 24.

[61] M. K. Gandhi, *In Search of the Supreme, Vol. 3*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1962), p.18

Unto this Last. Thus Gandhi came to use the term for his own ideal political philosophy. Gandhi is moved by the expressions of *Sarvodaya*; etymologically meaning "the betterment of all", *Sarvodaya* is based on love, proceeds on faith and on the maximum self-sacrifice for the good of others, and the upliftment of everybody. It is possible when no individual is neglected or overlooked in the *Panchayat* system, which through small village units will pay attention to every individual of the village. *Sarvodaya* is based on the belief that there is an essential unity behind everything. The forces of disruption that create distinction between 'I' and 'thou' are all rooted in selfish consideration.

Gandhi's Catholic attitudes and his assertion that sincere love and worship of Truth will bring together the Hindus, Christians, Muslims and all other religious unity, make him a political and social reformer as well as national leader and a freedom fighter with his weapons of non-violence and *satyagraha*. In all his struggles there was a spiritual message that spiritual development of India, and the movements of the attention of self-development can solve social, economic and political problems of the country. His view that religious belief as a common foundation can bring individuals face to face with God were clear. Nationality and morality can't be religions. For him all religion should explain the basic and the fundamental principal of unity, he stressed the basic unity of all religions and all religions should explain the fundamental reality of life in its context, thus religion controls every aspect of life.

The '*Sarv Dharma Samabhav'* concept of religions is much better than the notion of 'secularism.' According to this notion, there has to be brotherly relationship among all religions and if all the followers of the religions honestly seek their faith they will agree and fundamental principle and differences of interpretation will narrow down, if roots are traced and believed, no communal riot can take place. Thus variety is the law of the universe, two human beings cannot be identical with each other, hence a variety of religions will co-exist; let them be so that although there are differences there can be unity of efforts.

Gandhi opposed religious conversions vehemently; it has nothing to do with character building and moral development of society. Through the religious teaching we should teach and spread harmony and brotherhood, unwanted criticism harms the collective good of society. The need of the day is self-purification, not conversion. Thus the

purpose of converters is exterior, mundane and selfish.[62] According to Gandhi, God doesn't live in temple or in mosque, *Satan* can also dwell in these holy places of worship, if the worshippers do not have deep faith in God, worship can be meaningless, one should go to the worshiping place with humility and repentant heart, God is everywhere and he lives in every place.

IV. Bhagavan Das' Concept of Ultimate Reality:

Bhagavan Das was born in Varanasi on 12th January 1869, graduated to become a deputy in the collections bureau, later he joined the theosophical society in 1894, attracted by the lectures of Annie Besant and her dynamic work for the rejuvenation of India. Thus he resigned from the government office and became secretary of the board of trustees of the central Hindu College where he was a lecturer of *Sanatana-Dharma*. He served in the central legislative assembly of British-India and joined in agreement with the Hindustani culture society, was *kulapati* of the Kashi *Vidyapith*. He was an ardent advocate for national freedom from the British rule.

Inspired by Annie Besant, Das joined the 'Indian National Congress' during the Non-co-operation movement. Bhagvan Das' Book *"Essential Unity of All Religions"* is the product of study and analysis and not merely the formulation of a good likely idea. It has been taken up by philosophers as well as the spiritually inclined for reverent study. In 1955 he was honoured with the title *'Bharat Ratna'*. He has written more than 30 books, most of these are in Hindi and Sanskrit and the most significant work of his for our purpose here is the *Essential Unity of All Religions*.

The new proclamation of Universal Religion has to be made on 'democratic' lines. On these lines, those truths and practices which receive, not only the greatest number of votes from the living religions, but unanimous, those beliefs and observances on which all are agreed, should obviously be regarded as constituting Universal Religion. That there is agreement between the great religions, that all teach the same essential truths, their promulgators themselves are all agreed. We have their clear assurances on this point in what the different religious scriptures say. Bhagavan Das quotes from the Upanishad: "*Gavam aneka-varnanam, Kshirasya asti eka-varnata; Kshira-vat pashyate Jnanam, linginas tu gavam yatha*"[63] (cows are of many different colours,

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[62] Ibid, pp. 156-157.
[63] Bhagavan Das, *Essential Unity of All Religions*, (Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1990), p.60.

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but all the milk is of one colour, i. e., white, thus the proclaimers utter the Truth in varying forms, yet the Truth enclosed in all is one.) The Bhagavad Gita exhorts: "*Mama vartma anu-vartante, Manushyah, Partha, sarvashah*"[64] (the goal on which all human beings are marching all over the Universe, remains the same, they seem to be walking divergently; yet their aim is the same, the Universal self, which is self-consciousness)

The Zoroastrian teaching mentions that the one far-off yet always very near divine event to which the whole creation moves perpetually. Further, and we worship the former religions of the world devoted to righteousness. Buddha lived and taught in India, but it was spread in China; China has adapted Buddhism along with Lao-tse and Confucius as the trinity of the great Teachers. Thus Confucius says: "I only hand on; I cannot create new things."[65] Buddha and Jina communicate with the followers their past and future, and they become Buddhas (enlightened ones) and *Tirthankaras* or the makers of the bridges by which human beings may walk to salvation safely.

Jesus Christ says, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them."[66]*The Quran* makes this further quite unmistakeable: "*Wa ma arsalna mir-jasulin bi-lessani qaumehi.Wa kazalika auhaina ilaika Quranan A'rabi'-yalLetunzera umm-al-qora wa man haulaha ...wa lauja-a' lnahao Quranan a'jamiyal la qalu lau la fussilat ayatohu*"[67] (Teachers are sent to each race that they may teach it in its own tongue, so there may be No doubt as to the meaning in its mind.)

With many such insights from different religious leaders, Bhagvan Das points out that the essentials are common to all religions: that Truth is universal and not the monopoly of any race or teacher; that non-essentials vary with time, place and circumstance; that the same fundamental truths have been revealed by God in different scriptures, in different languages, through different persons born in different nations. Every sacred scripture has been inspired by God and is helpful for teaching, learning and for instruction in the language and through the cultural ethos of the community.

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[64] Ibid, pp. 60-61.
[65] Ibid, p. 61
[66] Ibid, p.62
[67] Ibid, p. 63

Accepting that the fundamental truths have been exposed by God in various sacred scriptures and in different languages, though they are born in different nations, let all ascend and meet on the common ground of those high truths and the principles that we all hold. Believing faithfully in God and the day of judgment, whether they may be Jews, Hindus, Christians or Muslims, they shall receive their reward from the Eternal God and they shall not fear it since ultimately there is Only one reality, unto Him all of us have to cling to the strong rope of 'Love Divine', we should not think of separating from each other, should be with one mind and heart, as the Eucharistic Ritual says, we being many, are one bread, one body, for we all are the partakers of that One Bread.[68] Thus God will come into human beings saying, whichever way you seek to come to me, as long as you do come to meet me I am ready at any time to come to thee and care for thee, man follow anywhere, mine is each way.

According to Bhagvan Das, there is only one Ultimate Truth, that is in one straight line, in the shortest distance between two points, all the curved lines are true and right in the knowledge of the one truth; the whole arithmetic is contained in the principle; the whole of religion, philosophy and science is included in the rules of three; also the Trinity in Unity: God, Nature, man, God includes nature and man. The significant rudimentary Truth is that man is the essence of one with God's Nature, the unchanging self that God has forgotten himself into in the representation of God the spirit as inserted into the dense matter along the path of *Pravrtti*.

For Bhagvan Das there are as many ways of searching for the true God as there are souls; as many as the breaths of Adam's sons. Thus each distinguished soul manifests an infinitely different aspect hence it is the return journey to God. Thus, according to him, there is only one goal, to reach to the ultimate-reality i. e., God; some paths may be straight and easy whereas some may be difficult, human beings follow as they variously determine, as there are countless currents in the vast ocean. "Quot homines tot dei" it is said in Latin *so many men, so many gods.* In Indian popular thought, one is meaning that there are thirty-three *crore* i. e. three hundred and thirty million gods, one god for each person. Ultimately man and God are one in essence, by every philosophical or scientific view, materialist or spiritual.

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[68] *The Holy Bible*, RSV, *I Corinthians 1:17-18* (Bangalore: Collins Theological Publication 1988), p. 162.

Bhagavan Das expresses that God makes man in his own image as the Book of Genesis says, but man also makes God in His own image, thus every human being is able to create God's image according to his own image. All have the ultimate reality of the creator according to their ideal. Therefore it is seen that anyone who follows in the way of life, whether beneficial or not, is ultimately a way of God and for them God fulfils Himself in countless ways.

According to Bhagvan Das, the essence of human beings, nay of all existing things, in their relation with God should not be set forth authoritatively as obligatory upon the faithful, for them 'He' the 'Third person' is enough, then they will come to 'I' the 'First person', for the intentions of harmonious relations with each other from disputes to bring communal peace and harmony. Is it the same Almighty God who has created all these races or has dissimilar gods done so? If it is the same, then of necessity, must not the same truths about Himself and the same commands for mutual goodwill and peace among men be represented in all religions, past and present, with only as much surface difference as there is between appearances and other natural conditions of different regions?

There are some religious denominations in all religions who are firmly convinced that God deliberately creates some souls to enjoy promised eternity, eternal happiness belong to them only, and other souls undergo perpetual punishment. Unfortunately this stage of extreme self-righteousness has to be passed through by every soul in the course of its evolution; one can speculate whether the God whom they believe is so compassionate, kind, gracious and loving, invites the sinners for the dependence, can 'He' be so cruel, indeed the 'He' the 'I' himself is the One in which all many are ever included, the One of which all the many are but as attributes.

Judaism and Christianity also indicate about the good and evil in the one, in the Bible, the Book of Isaiah says: "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I am the Lord that doeth all these things"[69] (Isaiah 45: 7)

In the present situation *Vaidika-Dharma* have-had modified practices which were known in Hinduism, but today the living religion is free from the degeneracy and the evil impressed in human nature. God is the destroyer as *Rudra*, Tempter and tester as *Mayavi*, punisher and corrector as *yama*. Islam acknowledges 'Him' as Al-Qahhar,

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[69] Ibid, Isaiah 45: 7, p. 741.

Al-Jabbar, Al-Mumit, an unpleasant person who misleads, tester, and death causer of righteous and wicked alike. Extreme distress of body or mind, mystery exceedingly disturbs the whole human understanding and there comes doubt of the ultimate beneficence of the Supreme reality, doubt created by the conspicuous fact of endless misery within each self. This conflict disappears when we realise that 'I' means the Lord, God, the Almighty, *Allah, Ishvara*, all ultimately mean the Universal pervading self, that all Good and all evil, the seeds of all the noblest virtues and all the basest vices, all end in Me, in every individual self, the Absolute self, but the human mind can't see the whole Truth, it has to germinate to be able to stand on its own feet and develop power of self-conscious introspection.

According to the faith of the great scientists of the day, the universe is governed by spiritual entity and not by matter. Realistically we are in the midst of a spiritual-world which influences the material, whose power we begin to realize, their forces controlled by a beneficent Fatherly power whose name is Love. Unless we unite matter with all the qualities of spirit, we have substituted the meanings of the two words; thus the Supreme Spirit is in 'Me', that is 'I'; and thus Jesus Christ says:

> If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know Him and have seen Him…He who has seen me has seen the Father…Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? ... Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.[70]

There is mysterious development behind life and the whole universe, that revolve around the One, who is the Godhead the designer of the universe, and all these revolve round the One. He who is destroyer of all the objects, that is 'I', since it is 'I' who bears every desire and act done by me, hence every living thing is regarded as 'I', particularly when man self-consciously speaks of himself as 'I', he is in essence, one with it, thus the supreme mystery is one-self, all religions announce, although entirely whole universal name belong to it, still every religion and language has given it one or two names.

All the creeds and practices, all the parts, of any religion, are not equally significant, or essential. All religions then make distinctions between the obligatory or compulsory; that the duty varies with time, place and circumstance is obvious and plainly stated too in all religions. The law for men is one in time of peace, quite

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[70] *Ibid., John 14:7-11,* (Bangalore, Collins Theological Publication, 1988), p. 103.

another in calamity. In the universe we don't see sing custom that holds good thus dharma depend on circumstance. The cultural variety adds colour and richness to it all. The example he has quoted of Prince Shotoku's amalgamation of Shintoism, Confucianism and Buddhism is a wonderful example in point. Bhagvan Das has taken up different aspects of religious belief and illustrated the commonality with quotations from several world religions to support his call for a Universal Religion. The Unity of the Universal Self is the Ultimate Dharma, characteristic property, quality, attribute, which is the obvious cause and source of all these aspects and meanings of *Dharma*. The 'Holding together' of human beings in a society is not possible without perpetual 'give-and –take', 'right and duty', incessant little or great acts of *self-sacrifice, yajna, qurbani*. The whole emphasis Bhagavan Das gives is to demonstrate the basic ONENESS of all religions. Names differ, languages differ, the various garbs in which they are clothed also vary a lot, but through it all, the fundamental principles remain the same.

CHAPTER III

Inter-Religious Dialogue: The Controversies, Conflicts and Challenges

Religion is a way of relationship with the Ultimate reality and its manifestations as God worshipped in different religions of the world. As we ourselves relate to the Ultimate reality it becomes a relationship to others through whom the Ultimate being is experienced. This relation is a kind of faith, which can be characterized as religion. Today's experience is that we are living in a society that is filled with people of diverse faiths. In our neighbourhood we meet followers of other religious beliefs. Their legitimacy, commitment to their religions and moral excellence is beginning to affect self-understanding and interpretation of one's own religion. Inter-religious experience is becoming as common-place as one's own religion, particularly in multicultural and multi-religious nations like India. As human existence is co-existence as many philosophers and social scientists say, when we live among other religions it is called inter-religious experience.

> A religion, however exalted, can no more define itself in splendid isolation from other religions. Rather it has evolved its own self-understanding, its manifold forms of relatedness to other religions. This takes us to the reality of dialogue in our life.[1]

Today the major threats to inter-religious dialogue are rank communalism, religious fundamentalism and culture of hatred and violence; these are the leaden clouds that are wandering over the field of inter-religious dialogue. The endeavour that religion could make for the cultural development of peace, expresses how in the contemporary context conflictive situations relate to human being's self-transcendence. Thus it is said: "Christianity has shaped culture and culture has shaped Christianity."[2] It is a proof that even at the international level we look for religion as an effective instrument to bring peace, justice and co-existence all over the universe.[3] In the impeachment of Warren Hastings, the first and most famous of the British governor-generals of India, and the most curious and learned about Indian culture, famously declared, "I love India a little more than my own country". In England, Edmund Burke said, "We deal with a country which has

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[1] K. Pathil (ed.), *Religious Pluralism*, (Delhi: I. S. P. C.K., 1991), p. 343

[2] Peter C. Phan, (2012), "The Mutual Shaping of Cultures & Religions Through Inter-religious Dialogue", *Inter-religious Dialogues & Cultural Change* Vol. *iv,* (ed.) Catherine Cornille & Stephanie Corigliano, Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, p. 38.

[3] Mathias Alphonsus, "The Future of inter-religious Dialogue: Threats and Promises", (*Journal of Dharma*, Vol. 19, January-March 1994), p. 10.

even plague as god for them; small pox as god for them; that is the kind of people we are dealing with."[4]

Today, though we are the citizens of an independent nation, yet we are not free. Some say, "I see Muslim with arms and I am afraid" and a Muslim says, "I see Hindus with arms and I am afraid". We feel that we are enemies of each other. He who does not agree with you is challenged to be an enemy. In the field of religion, the antagonism among the people is the true cause of human suffering in the world. If the whole world perishes who will live, that is the challenge of the times. This challenge could be handled only through dialogue, not significantly by politicians or artists. When so many atrocities are being committed in the name of religion, the religious leaders themselves have to take the initiative for the dialogue.

Religious traditions should work for greater credibility by rejecting radicalism and manipulation by fundamentalists, being ready to accept the signs of the times, thus contributing to the spirit and power of religious consciousness. Even religious heads have to go beyond the ethics and morality of human involvements to global spirituality, and bring human and divine wisdom together for curing the present crisis, so that in the life ahead the whole universe may find freedom and fellowship. All religions should introduce and contribute to Justice, love and peace; these should promote the culture of human life, culture of love, peace, and the values and dignity of human beings. Today we have too much to debate about the human rights and their violation. Thus every religion should affirm the holiness of every individual in its being created by God. Religions of the world should bring out the culture of love and peace; it should be foundational and be so adapted, that we can truly bring about fundamental changes that will abolish the culture of hatred and violence.

In the chronology of the universe which has been inhabited by the cruellest people, like Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong and Milosevic, unpleasant atrocities and crimes against humanity and the human race have been perpetrated. These types of crimes are not the teaching of any religion, nor have been initiated by any religions; it is the work of human beings who have acted on the basis of their nationalist and racist backgrounds, none of

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[4] Quoted in, Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer, "Religious Fundamentalism and the Present Crisis", (*Journal of Dharma*, Vol. 19 January-March 1994), p. 18.

them have been claimed to be religious persons[5] Thus our ultimate goal should be a modest and structurally theological religious pluralism accompanied by co-operation that encourages tolerance and facilitates co-existence religious variations. Mark Heim suggests that: "Discussion of religious pluralism is strongly motivated by concern for historical conflicts and violence among religions."[6] Yet the Lord of the universe has given birth to peace makers and peace lovers who, despite these wars - continental, regional and civil - along with the innumerable number of murders and deaths, strongly believe that worldwide efforts should be made today, so that all religions come forward under one umbrella, to promote the culture of peace and brotherhood all over the universe.

Civilizations often lack scriptural and theological harmony among the people; we read of violence in scripture, martyrdom or political violence within the religions. For some people conflicts amongst cultures and religions are subjective, for others only religion can assure peace and harmony. Today we are living in a scientific and technological era. Computers and mobiles make communication go faster and better. But we remain impersonal and easily manipulated; daily we get information and news whose authenticity remains subjective. Since ancient times religions have been blamed as being the cause and responsible for the current and ancient atrocities and conflicts. The proselytization and dictatorship demanding people's submission to their will as the will of God are performed by the representatives of God in the universe. Thus we have seen that religions have actively taken part in the destruction of human beings; we have sufficient reasons to say that religion is the principal component of conflicts and violence. The battle of good against evil is like the messianic salvation of the world to establish God's kingdom. As though those who conceive themselves to be more religious and want to do better are entitled to use all means to attain their ends. But factually, is this really true? Or is it the political power and economic concerns that are the real motivation?

I. The Shared Heritage:

The relationship between Islam and the long historical reciprocal interaction developed by Western colonialism, has been distinguished as Western political supremacy. There is no more urgent issue for Christian theological observation than the encounter of Christianity with other religious beliefs that occurred in a war against world-wide terrorism, thus

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[5] Mohagheghi Hamideh, *Inter-religious Dialogue in Conflict Situations*, (European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe, Vol. 37, 2004), p. 86.
[6] Mark Heim S: *Truth and difference in Religion,* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), p. 185

perpetuating the concept of Islam as a religion in conflict with Christianity and Western culture and providing for further violence and terrorism. Much of the justification for US armed forces' involvement in the war on terror, invoked as the Christian rational tradition, was specifically just war reasoning.[7] From the Islamic perspective that the Western domination is a chronology of humiliation leading to the development of a significant general conscious awareness, "that something has gone wrong with Islamic history."[8]

The widespread bitterness against Western colonialism and American foreign policy that came to be cosmically depicted as a prolongation of the crusader attitude of the Middle Ages was a refuelling of the flame of political conflict. The Western hindrances in territorial and local problems for the interest of oil beneficiation and the approval of the contemporary newly erected nation of Israel in the Middle East were similarly interpreted.[9]

In the Scripture of all Semitic traditions, the same God is described, as supporting political violence that favoured 'the holy war' and 'the just war', and then it offers a comparative reading of the different Semitic religious scriptures found in the prophetic books. The Prophet Jonah in Judaism, Christianity and Islam is a link for a fresh reading of Holy Scripture, that there is emphasis on non-violence in encounters amongst the competing religious traditions.

II. Monotheism and Semitic Religions:

The proselytising of the Roman Empire into Christianity imposed religious homogeneity on all its subjects, yet Jews were allowed to retain their own religion. When Islam originated in the Middle East, an allied practice of ideology by proselytising pagans was carried out. However, there was toleration of the Jews and the Christians who continued their religious beliefs; hence Judaism, Christianity and Islam contributed towards a tolerance of cultural and chronological influences. The Semitic/Abrahamic religions consider sacred scripture as the essence of tradition which contributed towards a chronology of religious and political violence, as manifested by the conflict throughout the

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[7] See Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Just War against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World,* (New York: Basic Books 2003). For a response from both Christian and Muslim theologians, see David Fisher and Brian Wicker, eds., *Just War on Terror? A Christian and Muslim Response* (Burling, VT: Ashgate, 2010).

[8] Wilfred Smith Cantwell, *Islam in Modern History*, (New York: Mentor Books, 1959), p. 47.

[9] Rosario Ruben Rodriguez, *Christian Martyrdom and Political Violence: A Comparative Theology with Judaism and Islam*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 37.

city of Jerusalem among the "People of the Book", portraying, nevertheless, a chronology of conflicts and comparative theological works[10] as well.

Almost all religious and intellectual traditions recommend non-violent resolution. If so, how can they pragmatically and scrupulously justify political violence? The Major religious traditions of the universe deride violence and do not counter political rebellion; however, some academicians blame religion for the stimulation of political violence and attempt to avoid religious views from discussion. Thus, both perspectives are inadequate responses to the realities of religiously motivated political violence. The former fails to obtain resolutions in condemning terrorism; the latter approach excludes religion from the space for a cultural dialogue.

According to the Christian analysis with regard to dialogue in Judaism and Islam, martyrdom is an inherently non-violent form of protest today. Theological understanding saw martyrdom as witnessing God's action in the universe. Today this concept has been perverted to the erroneous belief of martyrdom as violence recommended by the religious radicals. The theologian resists political violence and terrorism. The Christian tradition contributed to the critical discussion with similar situations. Judaism and Islamic Scripture narratives uphold the resistance of violence by bringing forth theological explanations against political violence. Theologically, for the Christians, the life of Christ is an example of a faithful witness to the entire universe. Through His crucifixion, Jesus gave witness of truth to his life, and his ministry is the model for all Christian action to be non-violent and submissive to the extent of accepting martyrdom.[11]

III. Catholic Church's Concept of Martyrdom:

Tertullian says that 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church'. This metaphor means that the blood of the martyrs is the life generator of the Church. Hence without persecution and martyrdom, Christianity (Catholic Church) could not have existed and progressed. Martyrdom is an essential element of Christ's salvation of mankind as interceded through the Church. However, in today's political profile, martyrdom is viewed as being destructive, since the actions of religious radicals are interpreted as suicide for a cause. While martyrdom is real in universal Christianity, in our time the first Christians could serve as models of Christian living under religious persecution, as manifested by the

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[10] Ibid, p. 3
[11] Ibid, p. 5

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persecuted Church in China, Latin America, and Africa and in the Middle East. In the Latin American segment of discourse, there are examples of confessional innocence and martyrdom under religious persecution: Maximilian Kolbe, Dietrich Bonheoffer, Martin Luther King, Father Rutilio Grande, and Archbishop Oscar Romero and many direct consequence of non-violent protests against Christian persecution, threatened in the public place when it comes to political resistance.

Christian life is open to the hazards of religious beliefs that are rooted in the Church's witness to the universe. Martyrdom is not atrociously wrong as an ultimate substitute. Martyrs' deaths are found within the domain of the proclamation of the Gospel. All those who died in testifying this work, acknowledge that: "martyr-Church" distinguishes itself as the scene of Christian life for the following of Christ.[12] Not every single Christian is aware whether they will be killed for their religious beliefs. "Martyrdom is a real possibility for every living Christian."[13] We must be careful not to view martyrdom as a characteristic seen in the universe. Thus every church is known to be a martyr-church, whereas not every Christian witness would be called a martyr.

IV. Religious Fundamentalism:

Some religious fundamentalists are linked to the religious and political conflicts in some progressive countries, and they communicate a general feature, namely, social and political offensives with national and international activities. The states give instructions that encourage the conflicts which are linked to religious terrorism e.g., current failed states in the world contain Cambodia, Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan. International religious terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda, flourish worldwide and their different cells in 60 countries are distributing money and training Islamic radical groups in the world. In his article "Clashing of Civilisations", followed by his book, Samuel Huntington, argues that the end of the Cold war and a new global clash beneath it, is to be more intense, as well as larger in scope, than the economical and conceptual conflicts as submissive as the Cold War within Western civilisation. The current conflict is between the Western world, Christianity and the Eastern world, Islam and Arab. Huntington's argument was that after the Cold War, the Western democratic encounter will involve clashes and conflicts with revolutionary Islamic groups, who dislike Western ideology and are inspired by anti-

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[12] Hovey Craig, *To Share in the Body: A Theology of Martyrdom for Today's Church,* (Michigan: Brazos Press, 2008), p.19.
[13] Ibid, pp.18-19

democratic religious and cultural dogma enclosed within Islamic fundamentalism, the primary panic to the world. Eventually, *Clashing Civilisations* ignores the radical Islamist rebellion and al-Qaeda terrorism has resisted opening political systems to become more outspoken. Thus diverse contemporary world's conflicts have religious components, a link between religion and identity politics.

V. Religion, Identity Politics and Violence:

Partition was a critical primary moment in the chronology of Indo-Pakistan relations. During partition there was not only a forced evacuation of human beings from their countries, but there were violent incidents of assault, particularly on women, who were raped and treated as slaves. They could not return to their loved ones lest they pollute the lives of others. The process of forced evacuation and social displacement turned into a major cauldron for crimes against humanity and it could only be prevented by education on the equality of human beings.[14] In this situation Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs where affected seriously. Due to the violence that took place, the breakup of families and the total displacement of thousands of people, along with the innumerable atrocities, cruelty and inhumanity were perpetrated that has taken generations to make a break through. Inter-religious dialogue is the only way to resolve the bitterness, and it requires a broad mind-set and purity of heart. Interfaith dialogue and the dialogue between civilizations and systems of knowledge and belief are necessary; dialogue is the encounter between human beings and must be undertaken with sensitivity and awareness of the historical background, as was the case in the following:

> Thus dialogue between the Jesuit Daniel Berrigan and Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh can never be read without the backdrop of the Vietnam War, so that the conversations that took place in 1974 asked difficult questions about the events of 1968. [15]

Partition saw the hostility and failures of the position of various expressions of the Absolute and supplies the source for the violent fight for socio-religious causes within a conception of narrative which is not religious but secular. While doing this it defies the primary politics of Hinduism, Islam and of Christianity and renders a version of Vedic secularity without the system. This traditional inclusiveness of Hinduism was replaced by

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[14] Rosario Ruben Rodriguez, *Christian Martyrdom and Political Violence: A Comparative Theology with Judaism and Islam,* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 16.
[15] Ibid, p. 14

the doctrinaire of caste system through the course of Hindutva, making non-adherents into second-class citizens of the Indian nation-state. Long describes as inclusivity the traditional outlook of Hinduism toward others, and thus the Hindus can adhere to the hypothesis that Christians and Muslims have significant spiritual truth. They read their sacred scripture, nevertheless trying to avoid significant interaction with Christians and Muslims.[16]

The shifting of power and Partition turned to engraved phenomena in the soul of India, so that together with freedom there was what Jade called vivisection on communal grounds.[17] Nevertheless as soon as things got out of hand, silence started to dominate, since the numbers of killings and rapes were enormous, and both Hindus and Muslims were involved in it. Gandhi's aspiration of a united-secular India was shattered, since in secular India all religions co-exist. In discussion with Y.M. Dadoo and O.M. Naicker, Gandhi said:

> India is now on the threshold of independence. But this is not the independence I want. To my mind, it will be no independence if India is partitioned and the minorities do not enjoy security, protection and equal treatment. [18]

After the announcement of partition and handing over of power in August 1947, violence erupted on a massive scale in Punjab and Bengal. Gandhi's meetings along with Jinnah and Nehru, related to the continuous violence at local and community level, in areas where over centuries Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs had lived and existed in peace and co-operation met with some degree of success though not before the violence took its toll. Patrick French analyses and summarizes the conflict within localized encounters that always exist within communities contending for resources, with the violent and mental agitation that took place after partition in two words, fear and revenge.

Partition separated Punjab from Lahore and many families were split by the border, yet worse were the atrocious and cruel deeds committed. On 14th August they found the bodies of 35 Sikhs who had been knifed at Lahore railway station. In reaction to these Muslim women were abducted from their families and were raped and hacked to death. The Indo-Pakistan boarder meant life or death for many living near them in August 1947 and in the months and years that followed. Some 2.3 to 3.7 million men, women, and children died in

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[16] J.D. Long, (2013), "Hinduism and the Religious Other", *Understanding Interreligious Relations*, (eds.), D. Cheetham, D. Pratt and D. Thomas (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 55-57.

[17] K.D. Jade, (2015), "The Partition of India & Its Reflections in Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan & Bapsi Sidhwa's, *Ice Candy Man: A Comparative Study*, Holos 31, 3, pp. 415-419.

[18] Judith M. Brown, (2008), "Independence imperilled by the Prospect of Partition*", Mahatma Gandhi: The Essential Writings, New Edition*, (ed.) Judith M. Brown, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.160.

the partition violence[19] and the formation of Pakistan involved migration of approximately 17 million people; it was one of the biggest mass migrations moving across the new demarcations of the partitioned country.[20]

Both the new nations, India and Pakistan, had become very different from Gandhi's ideal of unity in diversity. The absence of hope for dialogue between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs was negotiated by enduring all this in silence. The Muslim nationalists argued that Muslims are in danger in India. The Muslim League which was a small political party raised its voice, and in 1940, under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the flag was borne for a Muslim homeland; that homeland became Pakistan.[21] Thus the partition's first step was to provide a homeland for Muslims, a minority in India. Gandhi and Nehru reacted against partition, but then Nehru realized that to stop violence, partition was necessary, particularly in Punjab, Calcutta and Lahore.[22] In the wake of the atrocities committed during this process, it is natural that relations among the communities concerned will be strained, but the difficulties are not insurmountable. What is required now is a sensitively organised Inter-religious dialogue conducted in a free and an open-minded environment.

The results of these conflicts are acknowledged as identity clashes that involve self-identity and frequent polarisation between countries and in the society. For an inter-group dispute, the antagonists must attribute an identity to themselves, thus the conflict is between us and them. There are conflicts over unlike ideologies, there are inter-group conflicts, but the primary source is one of identity; many identities are based on shared values and concerns that contain religion as well as ethnicity, nationality and culture ideologies. This doesn't mean that such are monolithic identities, since every individual's self-concept is unique. Unification of many identities and compatibility contradicts many times and experiences of all of that are subject to representation. Race and religion are significant sources of identity in some organisation, whereas political ideologies and nationalism are judged by more of implication. Culture also creates conflicts, especially when ideologies polarise themselves as inherently excellent, while other religious beliefs are basically inferior; such groups are the victim of assault from another, they are to resist themselves.

[19] K. Hill et al., (2008) "The Demographic Impact of Partition in the Punjab in 1947", *Population Studies: A Journal of Demography, 62:2,* London: Routledge Publisher, pp. 155-170.
[20] Patrick French, *Liberty or Death*, (London: Flamingo, 1998), p. 347.
[21] Lucy P. Chester, (2019), "Image and Imagination in the Creation of Pakistan*", Mapping Migration, Identity, and Space,* (eds.), Tabea Linhard, Timothy H. Parsons, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 138.
[22] Rodriguez Rosario Ruben, Op. Cit, p. 48.

The situation that has tragically developed between Israel and Palestinians could be exacerbated by the political leaders who seek to gain exclusivist identities.[23]

It is impossible to predict where these types of conflict can occur by the influence of a simple explosive model. In recent years serious social conflicts erupted in a religiously and ethnically homogeneous country, such as Somalia but not in Tanzania, a nation with pronounced religious and ethnical problems. It expresses the governmental ability to achieve social solidarity which can transcend potential ethnic or religious schisms. Thus the religious identity in the contexts of social explosion could be significant sources of conflict in the developing countries.[24]

VI. Overcoming the Differences between Religions:

Religion is the most significant part of almost all human traditions, even if it is not an actual determining factor of life today. However, it appears in full force when conflicts or calamities arise. We often see that conflicts arise on the way towards attainment of exponential mighty power. In the fight for freedom, inhabitants have to seek influence and feel with intensity and awareness, a sense of their identity. In this way religion helps as a determinant and allows for stability and courage; but there is the hazard of abuse. Thus here the question arises as to whether the religions themselves are the cause of abuse or if religions have been misapplied through human thoughts, ideas and behaviours. There are religions whose inhabitants speculate on religious beliefs by their faith and way of life. Religion gives direction through revelation, philosophies and wisdom to inhabitants. It is the inhabitants who interpret, shape and live out the teachings and the traditions of religions. If we only get to know and judge a religion on the basis of its follower's way of life we make a mistake and attribute things to the doctrine that do not exist at all in its origins. Religion has become the principal cause of inter-religious conflicts, even when the protesting groups are discriminated by their religious identities, although the original cause is politico-social acquisition. Hans Kung has stated:

> The most fanatical, the cruellest political struggles are those that have been
> coloured, inspired, and legitimized by religion. To say this is not to reduce
> all political conflicts to religious ones, but to take seriously the fact that

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[23] Jeffrey Haynes, *Religion and Development Conflict or Cooperation?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 84.

[24] Jeffrey Haynes, *Religion, Politics and International Relations: Selected Essays,* (London: Routledge, 2011), p.112.

religions share in the responsibility for bringing peace to our torn and warring world.[25]

After the September 11th, 2001 carnage, there seems to be a clash among the religious based civilizations, when it was assumed that the Muslim world was at warfare with the Christian and Judaic world. Osama bin Laden has in effect, urged the entire Muslim world to forget their internal differences and be at war with all the universal Christians and Jews. He galvanized the Muslims and has constructed and concentrated on the conflict over the holy sites in Israel/Palestine; he has separated the entire Western world as Crusaders and reminded Muslims of past glories, when the Muslims were in control before being supervened upon by Christians in what is now Spain. To this the Western leaders answered that the struggle against terrorism is not an operation by Christians and Jews against Islam, but a worldwide attack against the radical rhetoric of Bin Laden and his followers. According to Thomas Friedman, the fight is not to eradicate any religion; rather it is to overcome an ideology of religious totalitarianism, with a different pluralistic ideology that will embrace diversity of religions, so that every faith could be nurtured without claiming exclusive truth.[26] Whereupon, many Christians and Jews promptly accepted their ignorance of Islam and attempted to appreciate Islam better, and pondered how radical Islamist rhetoric can be appropriately replaced with more conventional Islamic theology and ideology, and prepared to take this rhetoric as characteristic of a widespread pathology within Islam, which made Muslims usually defensive, leading towards becoming providers of emotional terrorist acts.

In the twenty-first century, no religion forgives genocide or brutality, but believes in the policy of live and let live. With the spiritual leaders in conflict, my observance is that they condemn all cruel and inhuman actions taken by the extremists of their faith. In the name of God, religion and righteousness, on these seeming ethical issues, blood was shed while the conflict remains unsettled. The crime committed in the name of religious beliefs is actually most significantly against religions. The Cross, the Crescent and the Star of David are symbols of peace, tolerance and reciprocal respect.

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[25] Quoted in Jeffrey Haynes, *Religion and Development: Conflict or Cooperation,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 76.

[26] Thomas Friedman, *The Real War*, *New York Times*, 27 November 2001, A21.

VII. Conflict Resolution and Peace Building:

Conflicts may have religious roots, whereby religious differences cause accompanying hostility and violence; however, significantly, religious beliefs may be effectively used as angels of peace against the war-mongers, for whom the conflict involving the religious factor is associated with violence. Similarly, violence in the African, Asian and the developing countries is progressively associated with social conflicts, although some of them engage with religious tensions. In the Middle East there have been significant achievements of peace and the simplification of poverty among constitutive states; nevertheless the region has numerous religious conflicts between Lebanon's *Shia Hisbullah* guerrillas, conflicts within Iraq between Shia and Sunni Muslims and between Shia Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia.

The Middle East is the birthplace of the three monotheistic religions i.e., Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Their legacy is not only of acquired religious wisdom but also acute social conflicts. Their complex relation impacts on all regional countries as well, as far as from the region including Philippines, which has experienced a growing number of extremist groups and in the recent years, also in Western countries, like the United States, England and Spain. All of these countries have had experiences of violence and bombing. Eventually bringing peace in the region needs significant collaborative efforts among diverse religious bodies with religious and secular associations from external regions, involving holding up models of peace and co-operation. Thus Middle East may escape from conflicts.[27]

The Middle East religions are linked for proclamation and prolongation of conflicts, as well as for seeking efforts at collaboration which express each religion's effort to bring an end to these conflicts. The manner and result of these efforts are uncertain, but they can play a significant role in handling these conflicts in several ways, and bringing about some kind of reconciliation, settling conflicts and establishing peace. Religion plays a substantial role in terminating inter-religious and inter-group disputes and establishing peace. All religious traditions recommend to the faithful that it is necessary to achieve peace and harmony within the communities. The religious leaders' orientation should be towards non-violence and the improvement of conflict through establishing constructive relations

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[27] Jeffrey Haynes, *Op. cit,* p. 77.

within the religious groups for the common good of the region and the building of a sustainable peace.[28]

The hostility and rivalry of religions frequently start with arguments against each other and end up in violence, conflicts and wars. Human nature is competent to make all ideas possible. William Boykin in 2003 was explicit about such hostilities when in Oregon he claimed that "our enemy is a spiritual enemy … His name is Satan and he wants to destroy us as a Christian army." At that time Presidents Bush and Obama were firm that the war on terror is not a war on Islam. ISIS had already strengthened the latter idea that could not be negotiated with them, this enemy is a surpassing force of evil itself and it must be destroyed. Religion is not the agent of war. Any solution to the conflict will come only when these underlying issues are addressed, that is, if people on both sides continue to see it as a big battle between good and evil. Jews, Christians and Muslims have experienced the worship at the altar of the God of War. They also know the God of peace and justice, while each of these Semitic traditions has been bent toward war. Once our authorities meaningfully focus on the God of peace and Justice rather than the God of war, then the new-age of religious wars may become an age of religious peace. Religion, to be away from this conflicted situation, would imply a radical change in worldview.

> …it is a misguided opinion to believe that religion could not be something that belongs to the enlightened epoch of humanity and will disintegrate and disappear as sham with the increasing enlightenment of human person about themselves and the world.[29]

Religion belongs to the nature of the human person, and will be found all over the world. Unfortunately there has been a revival of fundamentalist forms of all the religions, since 20th century, and the return of religious fundamentalism undergoes precisely the opposite of what the philosophical history of Hegel and Max predicted. Thus tolerance is producing the effect of deliberate disrespect in the discussion between the world religions. Mere tolerance cannot be sufficient because religion concerns the most personal centre of the human being. Religion can contribute to an ending of war, but can bring peoples together in the form of cold-war. Dialogue in the right spirit, on the other hand, can bring about a world where we can live under one universal religion with its regional interpretations.

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[28] Ibid, p. 78

[29] Peter Koslowski, (2001), "Introduction" *The Concept of God, the Origin of the World, and the Image of the Human in the World Religions,* (ed.), Peter Koslowski, Germany: Kluwer Academic Publishers, p. 1.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks says that Judaism, Christianity and Islam, each of them have a chronology of violence, and peace can be found only when religious leaders take heed of better qualities of human nature and choose peace over violence. Religious believers regard their chosen religious expression as generous and urging. Sometimes we observe that religious faiths are associated with violence and conflict among and within religious denominations. Two decades since September 11, 2001, and large amounts of literature have come out on religious contributions to conflict and violence, as its ramifications. In fact many armed groups affirm that religions approve of their activities in various parts of the universe.

Nevertheless it is striking that religion is often involved in domestic and international conflicts. When religion is arbitrary and unconditional, then the result is totalitarianism. The Semitic religions i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, have the challenge to identify the claims of the absolute divinity, practices and of human existence. This absolute and exclusive vividness of vision can lead to intolerance, over-proselytization and hostility to pluralism, and there comes aggressiveness and the willing use of violence becomes a holy objective for them. The leaders within the religious organisation often abuse their power and violate human rights in the name of religion. They misuse religious moralities and communicate with some terrorist groups.[30]

This is because each belief claims authority that comes from sacred texts which are divinely inspired, as the Holy Scripture for the Semitic religions contains exclusive truth. Hence, an invitation to religious tolerance and acceptance of diversity is necessary for their co-existence in a globalised world. Many religious traditions have among them religious beliefs which help build up a peaceful world e.g., Christianity proclaims non-violence which is the primary teaching of Jesus, who said that we all are the children of God, and thus we are brothers and sisters. God is with the one who loves his enemies and shares the good news with the poor. St Paul says:

> There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.[31]

Different religious traditions are actively engaged to put an end to the religious conflicts and to encourage post conflict co-operation between conflicting parties in the world. It's

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[30] Op, cit., pp. 79-80.
[31] The Holy Bible, RSV, Galatians 3:28, (Bangalore: Collins for Theological Publication, 1988), p. 178.

not a recent phenomenon as various religious organisations have for many decades mediated; in the Nigerian civil War, 1967-70; the work of the WCC and the African Conference of the Churches in mediating a ceasefire to the Sudan conflict in 1972; John Paul Lederach was the main person in the Nicaragua conflicts within and between religious leaders emerging from different religious traditions to settle conflicts and build peace. Religious peace-making organisations have resolved conflicts and established peace. Religious organisations have a specific role to play in regions of religious conflict. Peace could be encouraged efficiently by introducing four directions, i) emotional and spiritual support to the conflicted disturbed region, ii) provide effective mobility for communities and for peace, iii) provide mediation within the inconsistent groups and iv) passage or way through dialogue and reintegration.

Thus it is to be noted that the religious peacemakers may face two problems: a) often a failure of religious leaders to interpret their possible peace-building duties and b) many religious leaders lack the ability to exploit their strategic efforts to multinational performers.[32]

VIII. Conflict and Peace Building in Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia:

Religious reconcilers attempt to reconstruct community and peaceful relations for peacemakers in Africa and Asia. Catholic lay association Sant' Egidio in Mozambique was bringing that country's civil war to an end in 1992. Again, the Islamic and Christian reconcilers in Nigeria, and Asia highlights achievements of Buddhist to settle conflict, and establish peace in Cambodia. Mozambique's president Joaquim Chissano affirmed that conflicts and violence amongst parts of Africa and in the universe are danger to our peace building efforts.

The faith based organisation came together for reconciliation and is linked to the increasing role of NGO in civil society organisms and in religious groups increased reconciliation, e.g., a peace address in North Uganda among the Lord's resistance army and Government of Uganda in 2006 was arbitrated over the guiding years by a Christian NGO, Pax Christi. More typically a large amount of violence in various African nations is often related to social conflicts over religious beliefs. Many new conflicts in African civil wars multiply and armed with hostilities, due to poverty and disparity. The faith based

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[32] Jeffrey Haynes, *An Introduction to International Relations and Religion, 2nd Edition,* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 175.

organisations have more success to establish peace than any other entities. Perhaps the best reconciler was the intervention by the Catholic lay people's association namely Sant' Egidio International Catholic NGO, on the basis of charity; they have credited a significant role in concluding the civil war in Mozambique in 1992, which attempts at reconciliation in the various conflicts in many parts of the world, Sant' Egidio's peace establishing actions have focussed on non-religious conflicts, on the international level dialogues, which played a major role in establishing peace in many African nations beset by civil war, including Algeria, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique and Sierra Leone, and also in Colombia, Guatemala and Kosovo.[33] Thus this shows that the faith based associations could offer a unique skill to mediate and build a reputation for tolerance and sympathy, not relying on their own skills; that is how the Mozambique civil war came to an end.

Nigeria has more than 150 million population, while over 250 ethnic group major tribes are the Hausa and Fulani, predominantly Muslim in the North, whereas the Yoruba and Igbo largely Christian, predominate in the West and East; among them 50% is Muslims, 40% Christians and remaining 10% have indigenous beliefs. Hausa and Fulani are the most influential group who are 29% of the population, Yoruba 21%, Igbo 18 % Ijaw 10% and Kanuri with 4%; [34] these are the speculative figures, since the 1963 census failed to seek information concerning religious affiliation. From 1960, religion has been conspicuous in the Nigerian civil conflict which eventually turned out to be a deadly war. The problem appeared in the democratic regime; the Muslim members of the Constituent assembly wanted Shari'ah law according to the Nigerian constitution, whereas the Christians did not agree to promote such law. While President Babangida supported a secular state, an anti-Christian violence broke down in northern Nigeria, wherein more than 3,000 people were killed from both the communities and many were injured; thus many Muslims turned over to be fundamentalists.[35]

Nigeria faced the biggest religious violence in which more than 10,000 innocent people were killed. Kaduna was the main region of the deaths. This led to the founding of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in 1995 (MCDF). It was the effect of the attempts of former two mortal enemies, Christian pastor James Movel Wuye and Muslim Imam

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[33] Jeffrey Haynes, *Religion and Development Conflict or Cooperation,* p. 23.
[34] Cf., Film Guide, *The Imam and The Pastor*, (Georgetown University, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and world Affairs, 2013), p. 4.
[35] Jeffrey Haynes, *Religion and Development Conflict or Cooperation?* pp. 95-96.

Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa. They served as joint national coordinators of MCDF; they made a resolution that there be no more violence and militancy. They embraced non-violence, reconciliation and the support for peace, harmony and co-existing relations between both communities; and they advocated others to do the same; this gradually got the attention of the international community, namely their faith based on peace-making strategies.[36] Later a five day youth instruction in Kaduna was conducted, where the goals of the conference and the results of the event culminating finally in the present circumstance of challenges for this manner of peace work in the future were put across. According to David Smock:

> When communal identities, particularly religious identities, are key causal factors in violent conflict, traditional diplomacy may be of little value in seeking peace or conflict management.[37]

Religious surroundings contributed to express their apology, repentance and forgiveness. While religion is often seen as part of the problem and provoker of conflict and war, Wuye and Ashafa say that this demonstrates that religion could be a part of the answer to those conflicts and wars, since in 1992 each tried to kill each other in the encounter in the Zangon Kataf, Kaduna state. They felt that the events inspired by God led them to work unitedly as peace-builders. In 1999 they established MCDF and began to co-author a book, *The Pastor and the Imam: Responding to Conflict*, which is an account of their experiences that depicts the Biblical and Quranic co-operation to peace. In 2003, both registered their names at the School for International Training (SIT),[38] in the peace building institution; they say:

> Religion today, instead of serving as a source of healing sickness, hunger, and poverty, and stimulating tranquillity and peaceful co-existence among human beings, is used to cause sadness. It is bringing pain instead of relief, hatred instead of love, division instead of unity, sadness instead of joy, discrimination and destruction instead of accommodation and development. This is especially true between some adherents of Islam and Christianity. Niger has its own share of this negative phenomenon. Its ethnic-religious conflict has become a matter so serious and devastating that it can now be

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[36] Jinelle Piereder, *The Imam and the Pastor: Attempts at Peace in Nigeria using Interfaith Dialogue*, (Laurier Undergraduate Journal of the Arts I, 2014), P.71.

[37] David R. Smock, (2006), "Introduction", *Religious Contributions to Peace-making: When Religion Bring Peace, Not War, Peace-works*, (ed.), Smock R. David, Washington: United States Institute of Peace, p. 1.

[38] Jeffrey Haynes, *Development Studies,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p. 131.

seen as a harbinger of the danger of a crisis such as those that have engulfed the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Liberia.[39]

Buddhism had to face challenges with attempts in Cambodia to destroy and kill each other in the 1970s during the five years of communist rule; the government tried to eradicate religion in the state, including Buddhism, the major faith, while killing millions of Cambodians as a significant feature of their policy. The Vietnamese invasion removed the Cambodian build-up in 1979, following an international battle cry. The United Nations (UN) spent more than $1.75 billion in the work of international agency in Cambodia. Over millions of Buddhist in Cambodia raised its increasing voice in national affairs, over the social and peace initiative known as '*Dhammayatra* walks,' whose central idea was being merciful and non-violent, its focus being peace, harmony and co-existence.[40] The ideas behind the *Dhammayatra* walk consists of discussions and patterns exposed in the context of Buddhism. The interpretation of the Buddhist doctrine represents a significant revival of Buddhism in the post-Cambodian set-up that envisaged the only possibility of its multinational and inter-religious establishment, yet socially involved Buddhism in Cambodia which is linked to the return of Cambodian Buddhist exiles from Thailand and other territories.

A Cambodian called *Maha Ghosanada* instructed the travellers to move gradually towards peace, the intention being to reverse what *Maha Ghosanada* noted as examples of dangerous mobility adding, large internal and external changes and refugee flights of the Cambodian Rouge era that disturbed millions of Cambodian minds in many parts of the state. This discursive move that loosens the *Dhammayatra's* walk tries to slip across peace groups in its multinational public forum.

 Here it analysed the role of religion in conflicts, and peaceful solution; it stresses that inter-religion contest is often affected in the politics of identity, and so it turned to the religious individuals and faith-based organisations in conflict and towards peace-building in three countries, namely, Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia, involving a Roman Catholic NGO (Mozambique), Protestant, Muslim and community leaders (Nigeria) and the efforts of a Buddhist monk, *Maha Ghosanada*, in Cambodia, all of them working towards resolving the conflicts and working for peace. Eventually the question arises as to

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[39] Jeffrey Haynes, *Religious Transnational Actors and Soft Power,* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), p. 71.

[40] Jeffrey Haynes, *Development Studies,* pp. 132-133.

how we can prevent conflicts, disputes and war. More attempts have to be made in analysing how to improve conflict situation before it burst out.

IX. Inter-religious Dialogue in Conflict Situations:

After the end of the Second World War, the Middle East has been one of the most violent of the international polity. The chronology of the Middle East has been stressed by a number of inter-state wars and conflicts. Not all the conflicts were Arab-Israeli wars e.g., the Yemen war of 1961-64 and the Iran-Iraq war 1980. There were seven major Arab-Israeli wars, i) 1948 Palestine war, ii) 1956 Suez war, iii) June 1967 six-day war, iv) 1969-70 War of Attrition, v) October 1973 Yom Kippur war, vi) 1982 Lebanon war and vii) 1991 Gulf war.

The Holy site 'Jerusalem' or it is called the walled old city, is a portion of East Jerusalem which Israel captured from Jordan in 1967 and subsequently declared as their national capital. The Palestinians however claim and would want that East Jerusalem to be the capital of a future new state. The entire complex consists of the Dome of the Rock, the Al-Aqsa mosque, the various gates, fountains and the open areas. For the Jews the old city of Jerusalem is acknowledged as the Temple Mount and for the Muslims as Haram al-Sharif the impressive Sanctuary. This holy site has been the centre of controversy for the Palestinians and the Israelis. The Muslims consider that from the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Mohammed ascended to heaven, hence for them it is the third holy place after Mecca and Medina; therefore for both Jews and Muslims 'The Temple Mount' is the most sacred and Holy place. Due to its geostrategic significance and the oil resources, the Super Powers are involved in these affairs of the region. Their intervention affects the Middle East as well as the whole universe. Kenneth Waltz in his book "Man, the State and War" describes the State as the most significant element in international politics and the major cause for war in the Middle-East. According to him there are three views or images: i) Personality and Religious beliefs of the leader, ii) Domestic political power and iii) Regional and International power.

The Great Powers, that is Britain, France, the United States and the Soviet Union, have dominated international politics in the Middle East in consequence of the Second World War that assumed to be the focus of war in the region. Nevertheless, after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the emphasis has shifted to the religious features behind these controversies and religious fundamentalism across the world. On the September 11, 2001

attack, Hamideh Mohagheghi, an inter-religious and intercultural lecturer, who also gives seminars on Islam to the teachers of religion and clergy, says:

> I do not have an answer for how people who approve of such atrocities can reconcile these with Islamic teaching or rather, justify them religiously. My doubts turned into hope after we had had the first minutes of silence and prayer time together.[41]

Islam came to the fore of those who consider religion assigned to violence to be an undividable phenomena. The component of Islamic teaching pointed out assumes to prove that Islam is the main antagonist of the democratic world leaving the diverse ways of Islamic life and its demonstration, lacking the distinction in the use of terms like Islamic fundamentalists; thus terrorists want us to believe that terrorism and atrocities are synonyms for the teaching of Islam and even that terrorism has a religion. In this dialogue one can experience how unreliable people are in dealing with Islam. The causes for this are the insufficient knowledge about Islam and the developing international political affair. Through the superficial one-sided description in the media, blame is assigned to Islam, which makes it difficult for many people to believe that Islam is a religion of peace and justice. We have often heard about the Quran verses used out of context and misused by many Muslims as justification for the use of violence, whereas for the non-Muslims it is a proof for the condemnation of Islam, as for example Surah 2:190-191.

This verse contained a common concept that if they were attacked, how they should respond; in this verse the entire context is significant and so are the individual words and the message contained in it. The word 'to kill' also has other meanings which expresses resistance; the Arabic word '*qatala'* means 'to disarm' and 'disarming', which is also without the use of violence. What emerges from this verse is that people should not silently accept the injustice; they should act against the cruel and oppressive dictator. Working towards the establishment of peace and justice is a significant assignment for a person to fulfil during their life time. In a direct attack or violence, the possibility of defending oneself exists. In such a situation, strict rules forbid atrocities and indiscrimination of the enemy. Violence for the sake of expanding the faith, wars of hate and envy in other regions cannot be justified by this verse. These goals lead to injustice and tyrannies that is not the goal of Islamic belief. No excessive violence may take place in the defence to repel the false act of the offender. When the attacker stops, then there is no reason to fight with him.

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[41] Hamideh Mohagheghi, (2004), "Interreligious Dialogue in Conflict Situations", published by Berghahn Books, *A Journal for the New Europe, spring* 2004, Vol., 37, No.1, p. 88.

Here, the forgiving, compassionate and tolerant attitude towards the enemy is shown.[42] Killing and destruction is not in the vocabulary of defence. Though at first glimpse this verse can be seen as justification for violence, but at closer observation and in the chronological context, it is rather a limitation of violence. Dialogue gives us a platform for the awareness of one's own identity. It is significant to know more about one another's religious belief; for example;

> That Jews celebrate Shabbat, every week Christians go to Church on Sunday, and Muslims pray five times a day. But this is not enough for living with each other. Our readiness to make an effort to understand the importance and the meaning of this way of life as it is understood by its followers can lead to sincere reconciliation. The goal of dialogue should be an understanding and respectful relationship with one another; otherwise it is a monologue and a self-projection that in the end only makes happy the person who could talk about their own point of view![43]

In a dialogue everyone has many questions to ask; but the dialogue to be successful requires at which point and in what form the questions are asked. If the questions are judgemental and or abusive, then one can assume in most cases that at the conclusion many will speak emotionally, and the outcome will be division and alienation. Thus, if God wished, He could have made everyone into a single community, but He has not done that. He created human beings for the fulfilment of the task of pursuing justice and peace. Human beings should help each other; this is His will. The diversity of humanity is a necessary requirement for human beings to keep a balance in God's creation. Diversity is open to danger to live together in peace and harmony. When it comes to a nation, a community or an individual who possesses absolute power, then there is a great danger towards other's existence; he will try to destroy the beauty of creation for his own interests. God, the Ultimate Reality, the Ultimate Cause, the Absolute Power, the Unknown Cause, the infinite and Eternal energy from which all things proceed, the creative power the infinite and eternal energy, by which all things are created and sustained,[44] has absolute power and human beings have relative power. People who freely accept their faith and live accordingly, are capable of jointly solving the conflicts that intervenes in their lives, according to instructions; religions can offer them a firm basis for solutions. God demands

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[42] Ibid, p. 87
[43] Ibid, Vol. 37, No.1, p. 88.
[44] Andrew M. Fairbairn, (1996), "Agnostic Metaphysics', Nineteenth Century", vol. 16, *Herbert Spencer: Contemporary Assessments,* (ed.), Michael W. Taylor, London, Routledge/Thoemmes Press, p. 358.

justice and generosity towards poor and needy.[45] He forbids immorality and rebellion; He instructs His faithful so that we may receive admonition.

> Let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just; that is next to piety; and fear Allah. For Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do.[46]

Working in unity and having common aims does not mean creating a consistent mush, since God wishes diversity: "If *Allah* had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to *Allah*"[47]

Justice is obligatory for peace; it involves kindness and the distribution of resources for the rights and needs of others. Religions and the cultural melting pot, dominated by the various concepts of Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Manicheans and Buddhists, was a refuge for heretics to affirm the pluralism due to the natural diversity of the trade. The rise of Islam eventually replaced this diversity with one of the most homogenized cultures in the world.[48]

Religions always teaches non-violence, peace, harmony and living in co-existence that brings unity and creates agreement with the diversity of religions, their lifestyles and to work for a democratic way of life without misleading communities. The division of the universe into good and bad and civilized and barbarian creates a conflict between people and organisations. In this world more than 80% people live in poverty and the rest 20% live wastefully; thus the followers of religions should take their task as humans seriously. It is essential to make a resolution for the establishment of peace. Our encounters have to contribute to observe our common obligation towards the Creator.[49]

The theological similarities and variations are not understood without co-operation and tolerance; in a pluralistic society, encounters are most successful when people are involved in common human concerns. These types of confrontations are not discourses without effects from reality; instead they are dialogues of action, the most significant requirement

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[45] Hamideh Mohagheghi, Op. cit, p. 89.
[46] Ali Yusuf Abdullah, *The Holy Quran: Text Translation & Commentary,* New Revised Edition, Surah 5:8, (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1989), p. 248.
[47] Ibid, Surah 5:48, pp. 263-264.
[48] Luke M. Herrington, (2013), "Globalization and Religion in Historical Perspective a Paradoxical Relationship", *Religions,* University of Kansas, Center for Global & International Studies, p. 156.
[49] Hamideh Mohagheghi, Op. cit, p. 90.

is being with each other to attaining equality in living, otherwise, frustration can lead to hostility against other ethnicities, cultures and religions. Without political freedom, justice and respect for others, or with a disregard for religious or ethnic ancestry, conflicts will continue to exist and world peace will remain a fiction. When we invariably emphasise the deficiencies of others and try to prove that my religion is extraordinary and peaceful than yours, this is dangerous. While we admit that atrocities and barbarianism have been committed in the name of every religion, we can win confidence over other religions when we: i) understand detail of the other's otherness and attempt to have the similar opinion, ii) see the other as a person and not as another religion, iii) critically examine one's own point of view to prevent any intolerance. iv) Figure out which God, my fellow person believes in, find out how God's creation is being eliminated for his interests and v) when these tragedies take–place, we all are affected to look to overcome all these things.[50] We need mutual assistance and support, the concept of God may not be an issue. Ultimately the almighty God always helps us, thus the inter-religious dialogue turns into an interpersonal reconciliation.

For Muslims the primary core of teaching other religion's belief, particularly towards Christianity, comes from the Quran and from Muhammad; so that they give the primary source of acceptance towards other faiths as well as the constraint that is acceptable and what is not.[51] Sections of the Quran appear to be the same; many of the commentators accept it and accept the concept of God in Islam and provide an exclusive account towards other religions. The contemporary Palestinian scholar Ismail Raji al-Faruqi says that there are components within Islam that supply norms for inter-religious agreement and dialogue. According to him, variations between Judaism, Christianity and Islam are domestic disputes between members of the same family.[52]

Religious extremism that prominently plays a role to inspire violence may be the terrorists' attempts or devilish events that have taking place in the chronology we have studied. The September 11, 2001, event particularly, where the hijackers murdered more than three thousand innocent souls in the early morning, the attackers were demonstrating their liturgical expression and casting the victims as sacrificial innocent lambs forcibly led to slaughter, and they articulated the event as a warfare for the sake of God. Through all this

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[50] Ibid, p. 91
[51] David Thomas (2013), "Islam and the Religious Other", in David Cheetham, Douglas Pratt and David Thomas (eds.), *Understanding Interreligious Relations,* p. 149.
[52] Ibid, pp. 163-164

significant moment they were aware of their deaths and the deaths of their target; for them their religious belief was their motive. It is quite easy to accuse religion for such an evil act of violence contained in the name of religion; it is easier still to fall back on scripture for bits of barbarism between the text and the human action. Religion is not inherently violent or peaceable, but it is human beings who are violent or peacemakers. They do not refuse to accept that they committed a crime, Islam may not be a religion of peace or war, merely like any other religion, these nineteen persons read the Quran and assumed that they were sacrificing for the cause of religion!

They considered that it was the attack in service of God Allah. They were involved in a metaphysical battle between the angels of light and the demons of wickedness.[53] Their war was not against the eternal drives of evil, but against God's created beings and against nature, they conceived that the exceedingly gruesome battle has taken place in the heavens. Before sending the hijackers to the actual field, they have been given description that they have to read the unknown document like the script of a ceremonial rite, paying attention to all the heedful actions, rehearsed instant like a ritual drama taking hold of their being as we observe:

> "Purify your soul from all unclean things, the hijackers were told. Tame your soul. Convince it. Make it understand. Completely forge something called "this world." Pray the supplication as you leave your hotel. Pray the supplication when riding in the taxi, when entering the airport. Before you step aboard the plane, pray the supplication. At the moment of death, pray. Bless your body with verses of scripture. Rub the verses on your luggage, your clothes, and your passport. Polish your knife with the verses, and be sure the blade is sharp; you must not discomfort your sacrifice. Remember they may be stronger than you, but their equipment, their security; their technology-nothing will keep you from your task. How many small groups have defeated big groups by the will of God? Remember, this is a battle for the sake of God. The enemy are the allies of Satan, the brothers of the Devil. Do not fear them, for the believer fears only God, and when the hour approaches, welcomes death for the sake of God. With your last breath remember God. Make your final words "There is no god but God!"[54]

The ones who flew the aeroplane on that suicidal mission were instructed to pray for self and for their brethren, that they may get success in reaching their aims and ask God-Allah to recognise their martyrdom. 'In the name of God and religion, honour and reward in this world and in the next the thousands innocent souls were victimised.' For many Christians

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[53] Reza Aslan, *How to Win a Cosmic War: Confronting Radical Religions*, (London: Arrow Books, 2010), pp. 4-5
[54] Ibid, pp. 3-4.

it is obvious that the God who spills the blood of the innocent and rewards suicidal missions with eternal happiness cannot be the God they worship.

The interrogation is not primarily about the terrorism/conflict and their God, but for Muslims in their overall drive from a deep concern. Thus doubts come as to whether we worship the same God. Can we co-exist and live together? Each community has its own significant cultural, theological as well as political interrogation. Christianity and Islam are the speedily rising religions; they comprise more than half of the population of the world. They transform religions of a prophetic type, their adherence accepts liberalism, and they are intermingled across the boundaries and will push their vision to the benefit of the other, both communities living together. In 2011 in Egypt, during the revolution in Cairo, devout Muslims and Coptic Christians protested together by coming together to build a rising democratic system in which the rights of minority Coptic Christians were of great significance to the majority Muslims. At the peak of the Iraq War in 2004, Pat Robertson said:

> The entire world is being convulsed by a religious struggle. The fight is not about money or territory; it is not about poverty versus wealth; it is not about ancient customs versus modernity, No. The struggle is whether *Hubal*, the Moon God of Mecca, known as *Allah*, is supreme, or whether the Judeo-Christian Jehovah God of the Bible is supreme. That was a war cry! God vs *Allah*.[55]

Once again, this is an example of using Religion to cover up what was basically a political and economic driven battle. The conflict is not on the providential name of God or *Allah*, whom the Arabian Christians adored God in the name of Allah, or the Coptic Christians in Egypt, an oppressed minority, who use Allah to refer to the Trinitarian God, i.e., God the Father the creator, God the Son i.e., Jesus Christ the redeemer and God the Holy Spirit, the Sustainer. The Jews have faith in the unity of God (Shema. Deut. 6:4-9). He has a plan for the universe; various authors have written the oral traditions after the exile of Israelis (586-538). During the Biblical period, God has been hailed under various names, Abraham called God *El-Shaddai*, but in the *Torah*, the names are *Yahweh* and *Elohim*. The latter has the plural form, signifying one deity and *Yahweh* is a personal name; the gods of other countries were called *Elohim*, but were excited that the Hebrews did not derive from them.

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[55] Miroslav Volf, (2012), "Introduction", *Do We Worship the Same God? Jews Christians and Muslims in Dialogue,* (ed.) by Miroslav Volf, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. viii

He is described as creator, warrior, ruler, guide and shepherd, with variations within him and Israel as *ignou* is universal.[56]

The orthodox Jews reject the historicity of the Pentateuch; the first five Bible books were written by different authors, whereas for the Liberal and Reformer Jews, God has continually revealed himself throughout a period of time and not only the one revelation at Sinai. Thus the dispute is about the divine identifications; the problem is that 'Do Jews, Christian and Muslims have the same or different Godhead?' The Church diplomat, Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, prominently and unambiguously affirmed that Muslim and Christians worship the same God even though in part He is differently understood.[57] The person of Christ, the Second Council of Chalcedonies (in 553) affirmed that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are of one nature, one authority, worshipped as a trinity of the same essence, one deity in three hypostases or persons.[58] Thus there is one God and the Father of whom are all things and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom all things and one Holy Spirit in whom are all things.

Christians have invariably considered that they worshiped the same God as the Jews, although for Christians, Jesus Christ, is God incarnate and one of the persons of the Holy Trinity. The Jews do not accept the claims the Christians describe. Thus each of these communities has its own reflection on the Ultimate reality. Jews, Christians and Muslims have their own approach towards their beliefs. The theologians configure that each of the community should be taken into account and the three monotheistic believers need to be understood against the backdrop of reciprocal violence and conflicts since centuries till today.

There are considerable bases for similarity of beliefs in some accounts. Wittgenstein affirms that this is one way of the many beliefs, wondering for example whether it is the same person or another wearing the same dress. Are they from the same house, the same 'Reno' whom I know from his childhood? On the historical, spiritual, ethical and philosophical bases, Wittgenstein conceived that Jews, Christians and Muslims worship the same God, which is yet to be clear; he is more certain of this base than of the germinal

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[56] Robert Crawford, *The God Man World Triangle: A Dialogue between Science & Religion,* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), p.133.
[57] Miroslav Volf, Op. cit, p. ix.
[58] Lindsey Hall, Murray Rae and Stephen Holmes, (ed.) (2010), "4.12 The Anathemas of the Second Council of Constantinople", *Christian Doctrine: A Reader*, London: Publisher SCM Press, p. 135.

impression.[59] It doesn't mean that the three traditions find base or that they agree; they will have their own reasons for acceding that the three religious beliefs worship the same Ultimate reality. The three Semitic traditions are primarily Abrahamic and monotheistic theologically and historically. They claim that Abraham is exclusively their ancestor; God guides human beings through the revelation to the prophets; each of these traditions believed that God revealed his teaching up to and including their own scripture; thus each Semitic tradition gives significant to Abraham.

Judaism considered Abraham as the first Jew and established patriarch of Israel. For Christianity Abraham is the father of faith, and a direct physical ancestor of Jesus. His obedience to God by offering Isaac is seen as foreshadowing God's offering of his son Jesus Christ. God's promise to Abraham is seen as applying to Christianity rather than to Judaism, whose adherents rejected Jesus, as Abraham was a Gentile before he was circumcised; according to St Paul's theology, all those who believed in God are spiritual descendants of Abraham; thus the spiritual descendants are the sons of God. St. Paul says:

> It is men of faith who are the sons of Abraham …preach the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith.[60]

For Islam Abraham is a prophet and the messenger of God; he is in the line from Adam to Muhammad. He raised the foundations of the house with his son Ishmael, a symbol to which every mosque stands, and the first ancestor of Muhammad and the father of the Arabs and the Jews through his sons, Isaac and Ishmael. They consider Abraham as the first Muslim. In the declaration of the Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate* pointed out that Christians and Muslims: "Worship God who is One, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and the earth."[61]

Nevertheless, a more developed picture issues: *Nostra Aetate* emphasizes that all human beings are from one community, have one origin, since God let the whole of humanity live on the earth; they have one origin, heritage and have ultimately one aim. All share in a common fortune. His providence, evident goodness and saving designs are extended to all

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[59] Amy Plantinga Pauw, (2012), "The Same God?" *Do We Worship the Same God? Jews, Christians and Muslims in Dialogue,* (ed.) Miroslav Volf, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. 38
[60] The Holy Bible: RVSV, *Galatians* 3:7, 8-9, (Bangalore: Collins Theological Publication), p. 178.
[61] St. Gregory VII, Letter 21 to Anzir (Nacir), King of Mauretania (PL 148, col. 450ff.), or Editor by Flannery Austin, (1965) "Declaration on The Relation of the Church to Non-Christians Religions, Nostra Aetate," *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, Bombay: St. Paul Publication, p.654.

men against the day when the selected are gathered to the city which is illuminated by the glorification of God, by whose magnificence whole humanity will be shaped.[62] The diverse religions are an answer to the penetrative human consideration, the supreme and un-expressible mystery of human being from which origin we derive. There seems to be a point of agreement between Christianity and Muslim world, as the same document affirms:

> Thus the Catholic Church does not reject anything in that is true and holy in the religions, because it recognizes that what is true and holy in them refers to the Truth, which illumines all people.[63]

Thus it is very much noticeable that the Semitic/Abrahamic religions have undivided tendencies due to their monotheistic belief. Yet they blame one another for being heretical with regard to the primary practices of their traditions. Jews consider Christianity as a heresy since it venerates Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Islam honours Jesus as one of the Major Prophets but does not accept him as the Son of God; so according to the Christian view this is heretical. According to Islam the holy Trinity is polytheism and thus is a heresy; for Islam the Jews misrepresented the Torah. Judaism and Christianity do not accept Muhammad as a prophet.[64] According to Judaism and Christianity the teaching of the creation of the universe and phenomena takes an inclusive view as being potential.

Hinduism and Buddhism differ considerably from the strong exclusivism of the Abrahamic religions. The most inclusive may be Hinduism, which has been capable of fascinating various religious beliefs, influencing many. Sankara's *Advaita Vedanta* is a philosophical expression of this development. The least exclusivist religion is possibly Mahayana Buddhism, where everyone has the potentiality to become Buddha, one only has to be awakened and it will become real. Other tribes have their own deity, and the most pluralist form of religious beliefs which are more exclusivists.

The exclusive-inclusive dilemma is not possible to overcome without giving up significant parts of one's own religious recognition. It would be significant if for the reciprocal appreciation one acknowledges that all faiths claim their uniqueness in common. The ethos of reciprocal acknowledgement is significant in the inter-religious dialogue that leads to a

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[62] "Nostra Aetate," *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, p. 653.

[63] Christoph Schwobel, (2012), "The same God? The Perspective of Faith, the Identity of God, Tolerance, and Dialogue", *Do We Worship the Same God? Jews Christians and Muslims in Dialogue,* (ed.) by Miroslav Volf, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. 3.

[64] Koster Volker, (2003), "Toward an Intercultural Theology: Paradigm Shifts in Missiology, Ecumenism, and Comparative Religion" *Theology and the Religions: a Dialogue*, (ed.), Viggo Mortensen, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p.181.

uniqueness of one's tradition and acknowledgement of the rights of the other. Christian prospective gives this direction to the dialogic pluralism which functions in two ways: 1) The internal theology of the different religions within the Christian beliefs' scheme, and 2) the development of theological dialogue which considers the attitudes of others. Without coming together for encounter with their thought system, we will not be able to have a dialogue.[65] The most controversial theological issues are discipline and missionary zeal; ecumenism and comparative religion are going through mysterious changes for an intercultural and interdenominational approach.

The Semitic religions believe that the one God is the source and He sustains the whole universe, the God who is the author of heaven and the universe, whom they worship and serve. Christian profession is obligated to the theological traditions of Judaism which it shares as well with Islam. The theological supposition describes each tradition and assures human beings of a Divine revelation. The Semitic religions believed that there is only One Universal Reality who is the author and upholder of all humanity. The Jews, Christians and Muslims affirm and worship the same reality. This is not general admitted for there are traditions that affirm that the world was made by a form of deity, whereas the Christian belief is that God is the source of the whole universe.

The reality of God, who is invariably infinite, proceeds from human understanding. Christians can hear in Jewish and Muslim theologies the same expression of the truth. It is not that each of the traditions can claim to have correctly conveyed a pure vision of God. For the Jews, Christians and Muslims, God is not a physical entity to be analysed but is an active subject who encounters us in mysteries. St Paul says: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood."[66]

God cannot be abridged in variations, in theological perception; one cannot nullify or affirm that the three traditions worship the same God. Christian theologians affirm that the one God is the Creator of heaven and earth relates to a heavenly self-determination developing out of the perfect perpetual trinity. Christians have acknowledged that the grace poured-out in Jesus Christ is given freely and unconditionally. The freedom displayed in this redemptive love of God's creativity is an unconditional gift. God is not experienced

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[65] Ibid, p.181

[66] The Holy Bible: RSV, *I Corinthians 13:12,* (Bangalore: Collins for Theological Publication, 1988), p. 165.

and loved by Christians alone, but all are invited. The entire universe depends on God for its very existence, whereas God doesn't depend on it. The Godhead and the creature differentiation itself is the effect of God's authority.

Christians remain firm on the mutual basis with Jews, Muslims and rest of humankind in their dependence on God, even when human beings are rebellious, even they are resentful of God's loyalty towards others. The loyalty of God in transmitting special gifts to Israel, through Jesus Christ pertains among the larger framework of acknowledgment which one is inclined to assume and which gladdens Jews and Muslims who praise God for His faithfulness towards them. The praise and veneration of Jews and Muslims should be seen as a manifestation of God's generosity to them, which calls for in a Christian, a new appreciation of the heavenly Trinitarians' typical understanding of divine kindness and a deep responsiveness.[67] Christian religious belief depicts divine life necessitating us as well towards giving, relying and assuring. The incarnation of God in Jesus Christ is seen from the eyes of Rowan William who says: "What we understand by 'God' can't just be power an initiative; it also includes receiving and reflecting back in love and gratitude."[68]

X. The Semitic Religious 'Family Resemblance':

The three Semitic religions spread in Arabian Peninsula, sharing similar values, guidelines and principles. Islam incorporates Jewish and Christian history and spirituality as a concept of its own and regards Israel as a main concept in Islam. Moses is the most significant person for Judaism as well as for Islam. There are forty three references to the Israelites in the Quran and many times in the Hadith. The Spanish philosopher, Moses ben Maimon, also called Rambam, was the greatest Jewish scholar during the Middle Ages, who stated that Jewish law in the Talmud, set out the cognition for Semitic law, and influenced Islamic legal thought because Islam, Judaism and Christianity share a common origin through Abraham; three of them are considered Abrahamic/Semitic religions. Hence we see many similarities and the influence of Jewish and Christian culture and philosophy on the Muslim community. Within the Islamic world there has been continued physical, theological and political overlap between the Semitic faiths in the subsequent 1400 years.

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[67] Amy Plantinga Pauw, (2012), "The Same God?" *Do We Worship the Same God? Jews, Christians and Muslims in Dialogue,* (ed.) by Miroslav Volf, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, pp. 42-43.

[68] William Rowan, *Tokens of Trust: An Introduction to Christian Belief,* (London: Canterbury Press Norwich, 2007), p.66

Rabbi Mukhayriq was the first waqf, a charitable endowment of Islam, from Rabbi Mukhayriq. Muhammad inherited seven date gardens and used this wealth to establish the first waqf a charitable endowment of Islam.[69] Also in 1027 Jew Samuel Ibn Naghrillah became primary adviser and a military general of the Taifa of Granada.

During the time of Muhammad, Islamic conquests there were military expansions on an unprecedented scale; it went up to the Ottoman wars in Europe, to the thirteenth century and continued on all fronts for another half a millennium till the final collapse of the Mughal Empire in the east and the Ottoman in the west with the onset of the modern period.

Between the seventh and eleventh centuries, conflict among Muslims, known by the term Fitna, is the concern of this period of Islam. This is classified as a religious war; in Islamic domination no such division has ever existed, hence there was no true division between wars that are religious and non-religious. Islam doesn't have any normative discipline that deals with all international disputes which can be settled by arbitration. And In the Islamic Chronology, from the time of Muhammad, along with defence and spread of the faith, warfare has been an integral part of Islamic theological system. Subsequently during the time of Muhammad, Islam has regarded warfare to be an establishment of religious faith and the defence of more than 1,000 years Islamic existence the use of warfare by Muslim propagation of Islam was well known.[70]

The Islamic concept which referred to the religious duties of Muslims to maintain the religion is known as Jihad, in Arabic the word jihad means to strive, to struggle, persevere, and a person involved in jihad is called a mujahid and plural form mujahideen. Very often the word jihad appears in the Quran to express, "striving in the way of God (al-jihad fi sabil Allah)" to relate to the act of striving to serve the purposes of God on this earth. For the Sharia law manual of Shafi', reliance of the traveller, Jihad means to war against non-Muslims, and is etymologically derived from the word *mujahada* intended for warfare to establish the religion.[71] There are two meanings of Jihad: internal struggle, that is the spiritual jihad and external struggle against the enemies of Islam that may cause violence. Jihad is often interpreted as the Holy War.

[69] Rabbi Maller S Allen, *Rabbi Mukhayriqs Waqf to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.),* (7th Jan 2013), There is no unity [of God], like the unity fount in Islam, Mayim Hayyim, Yoreh Deah, #66, Judaism-Islam.com
[70] Sayeed Ahmed, *Truth is Law, Faith is Law,* (Bhopal, Nitya Publication, 2021), p. 173
[71] Ibid, p. 174

In the Hadith, the second most important source of information on Islamic law (Shari'a), Jihad means armed action; there are 199 references to jihad and in the criteria collection of hadith, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, it is assumed that jihad signifies warfare.[72] More generally speaking, Bernard Lewis, one of the overwhelming majorities of the classical theologians, jurists and specialists in the hadith, understood the obligation of jihad in a military sense.[73]

According to Jonathan Berkey, jihad in the Quran may be primitively attached against Muhammad's local enemies, the pagans of Mecca, and the Jews and the Christians of Medina; but by the Quran's affirmations, jihad could be sublimated to new enemies appearing to struggle by the sword.[74] Thus the first act of military Jihad took place after the migration (*hijra*) of Muhammad and his followers to Medina from Mecca and the conversion of various inhabitants of the city to Islam and was recorded in Surah 22; 39-40. Those against whom the war is made are given permission to avoid the fight if they say our Lord is Allah. According to Richard Edwards and Sherifa Zuhur, offensive jihad was adopted by the primitive Islamic community because of what their weakness would mean:

> Offensive jihad was essentially adopted by the early Muslims community, as no defensive action would have sufficed to protect them against the allied tribal forces determined to exterminate them. In such a jihad, the People of the Book (*dhimma*), meaning other monotheistic traditions including Judaism and Christianity, must be treated differently than enemies who are unbelievers (kuffar).[75]

Jihad as a collective duty (*Fard Kifaya*) and offensive jihad are synonymous in classical Islamic law and tradition, which also asserted that offensive jihad, could only be declared by the caliph, but an "individually incumbent jihad" (*Fard Ayn*) required only "awareness of oppression targeting Islam or Islamic peoples."

Shia doctrine teaches that jihad could be only carried out under the leadership of the Imam, he will return from occultation to bring infinite justice to the world; nevertheless, struggles to defend Islam are allowable before his return. Jihad, also constructed from the Arabic word *Juhd*, means exerting one's capacity and power in repelling the enemy to the extent of one's ability through words or human activity. Thus for the legal expert, jihad world differentiate into Muslim and non-Muslim regions. This discrimination created unceasing

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[72] Muhammad ibn Ismail Bukhari, *The Translation of the Meaning of Sahih al-Bukhari, trans.* Muhammad Muhsin Khan, 8 vols. (Medina: Dar al-Fikr: 1981), 4:34-204.

[73] Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p.72.

[74] Cf., Sayeed Ahmed, *Truth is Law, Faith is Law,* (Bhopal, Nitya Publication, 2021), p. 174

[75] Clarke P. Colin, (ed.) *Terrorism The Essential Reference Guide,* (California: Santa Barbara, 2018), p.105.

warfare between Muslims and non-Muslims until the territory comes under Muslim control. Explicitly jihad doesn't imply forced conversion; the Quran 2:256, states "there is no compulsion in religion." But Jihad has a political intention towards establishing the Muslim kingdom, which in turn has two gains, namely, it formulates Islamic supersession of other religious beliefs and creates the chance for Muslims to establish a fair political and social order.

Today's Islamic community view many concepts of jihad such as: the Ibn Taymiya's revolt against the impious ruler, *Sufi's* modernist notion of political and social reform. There is a difference of interpretation of jihad among the Muslims that is deeply rooted in the variety of Islamic concept. The obvious involvement that Islam has undertaken in the name of jihad a millennium ago does not mean they should continue to do so in the present time.

The Islamists tradition sees ahead to the state of war against the Western culture; the concept of jihad is not terrorism but permanent soldiers of Allah. For them their enemies are in the form of modernisation, which is associated with Western countries and within the Arab and Islamic world. Thus the soldiers of Allah must wage perpetual war on many battlefronts; their war is for self-defence for this, Islam uses all the possible methods of defence, including terrorism. The success or failure of Islamic jihad or terrorism does not depend on the intensity of the religion; it lies in their ability to gain genuineness from common people, from the Islamic and the Arabic world. Compassion and endorsement is an essential for every Islamist group without involvement in its ideology. In a society where religion has significant importance in the Islamic world, where the views are significantly taken as true principles of religion by certain parts of Islamic societies, the support of various Islamic terrorists in many parts of the Islamic world extends the solidarity with the sensitivity of conflict with the West and United States. This provides authenticity to indiscriminate terrorism as the cover of a religious obligation of jihad. This phenomenon impresses the populace and the regimes. Arabian countries did not perceive the American strikes in Afghanistan and Sudan as part of counter-terrorism but as an unreasonable hostility. The whole Arab world remains indifferent; Egypt and Jordan

condemned the US action. Terrorism as "the weapon of the poor" is considered as self-defence; whereas American defence is regarded as a "war crime."[76]

Nevertheless, terrorism is going to be a long enduring matter, where the fundamentalists are perpetrators of acts of terrorism. The US and its allies encounter not only Al Qaeda and its partners form the Egyptian Islamic jihad and Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya; Philippine's Abu Sayyaf group; Indonesian Jammah Islamiya and a host of other groups controlling many Islamic states, also encounters various Islamic regimes encouraging jihadi/terroristic ideology and endorses and provides them financial help. In the Islamic domain one cannot distinguish between political violence and encouragement from religion. The significant wonder remains as to how the West, U.S. and world as a whole should endure terrorism.

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[76] P.D. Sharma, *The New Terrorism: Islamist International*, (New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, 2005), p. 9.

CHAPTER IV

Inter-religious Dialogue: The Case for Semitic Religions

The religions of the world can be broadly categorized into Semitic and non-Semitic religions. Non Semitic religions can further be divided into Aryan and non-Aryan religions. The word Semitic refers to the people who came from the Middle East, whose religions originated among the Jews, Arabs, Assyrians, Phoenicians and many other tribes. However, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are the main Semitic religions, also called Prophetic religions since they believe in Divine guidance sent through the prophets deputed by God. In the beginning of the twenty first century it was estimated that 54% of the world population consider that Abraham is their Patron and the main source of faith. The chronological order of Semitic Religions in the founding is: Judaism was founded in the first millennium BCE, Christianity in the first Century A.D., and Islam in the seventh Century. Jewish tradition claims that the first three Biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the spiritual sources for them, whereas Christianity refers to Abraham as the father of faith, and Islam refers to *millat* Ibrahim, meaning Islam follows the traditions of Abraham.

I. Dialogue and Semitic Religions:

Dialogue is a literary technique in which writers employ two or more characters engaged in conversation with each other. In literature, it is a theatrical arrangement that depicts such a conversational passage, spoken or written as an exchange of conversation in a group or between two persons directed towards a particular subject. It may be philosophical; it is an expressive style connected in the West with the Socratic dialogue which is developed by Plato but the forbears are also found in Indian literature. The use of dialogue can be seen back in the *Upanisadic* texts and the classical literature. Other philosophers also used this technique for rhetorical and argumentative purposes; in general, dialogue makes literary work enjoyable and lively.

Lecturing or speaking is obviously not dialogue. There are different ways of two-way communication e.g., arguing, debating, communication, and encouragement, reinforcement; but all these are certainly not dialogue. Dialogue should include the notion that neither side has a total grasp of the truth of the subject, but rather, that both need to seek further, hence dialogue doesn't mean one side having a monopoly on the truth of the

subject but both need to seek further. Dialogue is the means of learning new truths about a subject matter that both sides agree on. Thus the initial part of the meaning of dialogue could be understood as:

> Dialogue is a two-way communication between persons who hold significantly differing views on a subject, with the purpose of learning more truth about the subject from one another.[77]

In the 20th century, philosophical dialogue sprang up from thinkers like Paulo Freire, Mikhail Bakhtin, Martin Buber and David Bohm. They have expressed the nature of dialogue in a holistic way, as a multi-dimensional, dynamic and dependent process of creating meaning. Ramon Flecha and Freire developed and used dialogue as an egalitarian pedagogical tool. In the Middle East and in Asia such examples are Sumerian disputations preserved in copies from the third millennium BC, Upanisadic dialogues, hymns and the Mahabharata. In the West, Plato (c, 437BC-c.347BC) was attributed with giving a systematic way of dialogue as an independent literary form. Further, Plato simplified form and reduced dialogue into pure argumentative conversation.

The word *Dialogue* is derived from Old French *dialoge*, from Latin *dialogus* and from Greek dialogues, which means 'conversation'. In the past we had so many encounters, many dialogues meant mainly to defeat an opponent or to negotiate with others. Sometimes dialogue is used just for confrontation; sometimes dialogue is more openly polemical. The ultimate goal was to defeat others, under the wrong conviction that we alone have the *True belief*. However, true dialogue is neither debate nor negotiation. In dialogue each individual listens to the other sympathetically to attempt to understand others, positing precisely as it were as much from within as possible. This type of attitude includes the assumption that at any point we may find our companion's position so persuasive that if we acted with integrity we would have to change. Such types of dialogues and changes will deepen our understanding of *faith*, and the ultimate truth of the world. Dialogues are not superficial or only on the intellectual level but at a much deeper level, providing a way of encountering and understanding oneself and the world. Thus the deep dialogue on a broad communal scale is a whole new way of thinking and understanding of the world.

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[77] Leonard Swidler, "The Importance of Dialogue" *Trialogue: Jews, Christians and Muslims in Dialogue*, (eds.), Leonard Swidler, Khalid Duran and Reuven Firestone (New London: Twenty third Publication, 2007), p. 7.

II. Inter-religious Dialogue:

Over the last 60-65 years, Inter-religious dialogue has been regarded as a significant and integral part of human society in the globalised world. This led to the various interfaith commissions, international meetings, academic, humanitarian and spiritual movements aimed at creating greater understanding and co-operation between people of different faiths. In the present decades dialogues between Judaism-Islam, Christianity-Islam, and Islam-Hinduism are urgently needed to counter the tension and misunderstanding which has been created by world events. Dialogue is living our faith in the presence of other faiths by reaching out to them in a spirit of openness and tolerance. Some of the thinkers understand "dialogue" in the following ways:

> Interreligious/interfaith dialogue is about people of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and co-operate with each other in spite of their differences. The term refers to co-operative and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions, (i.e. faiths) at both the individual and institutional level. Each party remains true to their own beliefs while respecting the right of the other to practice their faith freely.[78]

> Dialogue is all positive and constructive of interreligious relations with individuals and communities of faith which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom.[79]

> Dialogue is a two-way communication between persons who hold significantly differing views on a subject, with the purpose of learning more truth about the subject from one another.[80]

> Dialogue is comparative theology in the broad sense of the term, as a constructive engagement between religious texts, teachings, and practices oriented toward the possibility of change and growth. To be sure, it is not likely that every dialogue between religions will actually yield religious fruit. But it is the very possibility that one may learn from the other which moves religious traditions from self-sufficiency to openness to the other.[81]

The above statements on dialogue tell us that dialogue is about building constructive relationships with people of different faiths, mutual understanding and respecting the religious freedom of the other. Inter-religious dialogue does not aim at coming to a common belief or faith, nor does it aim at proselytizing others but in dialogue each party

[78] Gerard Fode, *A Journey Together*, (Ireland: Wilton, Cork, 2013), p. 7.
[79] Ibid, p. 7
[80] Leonard Swidler, Op, cit., p. 7.
[81] Catherine Cornille, "Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, (ed.), Catherine Cornille, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), p. 20.

remains true to their own faith and there is no space for arguing, attacking or disproving the beliefs of the others. It is about increasing mutual affection and trust. Through dialogue we come into daily contact with each other. Dialogue does not just take place on an official or academic level, but it should be part of our daily life during which different cultural and religious groups interact with each other directly where tensions between them are the most tangible. Inter-religious dialogue refers to co-operative, constructive and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions, spiritual and humanistic beliefs at individual as well as institutional level.

In 1910 Bishop Charles H. Brent, a missionary Episcopal in the Philippines, discussed the questions of faith and ecclesiastical order by deliberately addressing the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States and urged them to take the lead in founding a conference on faith and order; and the response was favourable. The Vatican expressed compassion towards the same. After the First World War in 1919 the first world conference for faith and order was set for August 3, 1927; 394 representatives from 108 Christian denominations met in Lausanne. Thus during the crisis of the churches result was amazing.

A like effort was put together for the second large Ecumenical movement for life and work which was also intimately bound up with the First World War and the world Alliance of Churches for promoting international relationship unity on the matter of faith and order, during the helplessness of the churches in the crisis during first and second world wars. Thus they came with one voice saying that we should not be separated, we should be truly united in religious belief and church organization, this Ecumenical Council would not encroach on the separateness of the churches, and would not deal with matter and order, but will deal with social and international problems. The planning committee of life expressed it in 1922: "Doctrine divides but service unites."[82]

III. Second Vatican Council:

The first international conference of life and work was held in Stockholm on August 19, 1925. The Holy See initially did not join in the Ecumenical movement, it took 40 years to understand the beauty and significant of the movement, and then on the spur of the moment miraculously, the senior Cardinal Angelo Roncalli was chosen as the Pope.

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[82] Leonard Swidler, "The History of Inter-Religious Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, (ed.), Catherine Cornille, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), p. 5.

Shortly after his installation as Pope, St. John XXIII called all the Cardinals of the world to Rome to engage in "dialogue with the world."[83]

Thus II Vatican council came with a powerful proclamation on the relation of the Church to other faiths, with different documents for Ecumenism and inter-religious/interfaith dialogues, *Nostra Aetate,* meaning 'in our age,' promulgated during the final session of the council on 28th October 1965, was recognized not only by the Catholic-Jewish community but also by the followers of other faiths. This declaration has proved a genuine milestone in inter-religious dialogue. *Lumen Gentium* had given new ground in the history of the twenty first ecumenical councils of Catholic Christianity by its positive remarks about Judaism and Islam. Nostra Aetate further reflected on other religions, particularly Eastern Religions, by considering the human conditions and the riddles of the human condition to which different religions provide an answer and for the first time in the history of the Roman Catholic Church an Ecumenical council honoured as the work of the living God, the truth and holiness to be found in certain other religions.

The *Second Vatican Council,* coming with new ideas of the world religions in the document *Nostra Aetate,* expressed the human search for meaning with such clarity that it merits acknowledgement here. Humans look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence. The problems that weigh heavily on the hearts of humans are the same today as in the ages past:

> What is man? What is the meaning and the purpose of life? What is upright behaviour, and what is sinful? Where does suffering originate, and what end does it serve? How can genuine happiness be found? What happens at death? What is judgment? What reward follows death? And finally, what is the ultimate mystery beyond human explanation, which embraces our entire existence, from which we take our origin and towards which we tend?[84]

From the above questions we can reasonably assume that the Catholic Church does not hold other religious faith as totally false. Rather, as Swidler points out:

> The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. It has high regard for their manner of life and conduct, their precepts and doctrines …The Church therefore urges its members to enter

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[83] Ibid, p. 7

[84] Flannery Austin, *Second Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, on Other Religions,* (Bombay, St. Paul Press Training school, 1992), p. 653.

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with prudence and charity into dialogue and collaboration with members of other religions preserving and encouraging the moral truth found among non-Christians as well as their social life and culture.[85]

Vatican Second council in 1964 required every National Conference of Bishops around the world and every diocese to set up secretariats for dialogue with: i) other Christian denominations and the Jews, ii) non-Christian religions and iii) non-believers. Dialogue is a dynamic course of action which can change the form of modern society by recognizing the pluralism of society; by the maturity man has reached in this day and age his secular education has enabled him to think and speak and to conduct a dialogue with dignity. Doctrinal dialogue and discussion should be introduced with commitment and reverence:

> Doctrinal discussion requires perceptiveness, both in honestly setting out one's own opinion and in recognizing the truth everywhere, even if the truth demolishes one so that one is forced to reconsider one's own position, in theory and in practice at least in part…[I]n discussion, the truth will prevail by no other means than by the truth itself. Therefore the liberty of the participants must be ensured by law and reverenced in practice. All Christians should do their best to promote dialogue between men of every class as a duty of fraternal charity suited to our progressive and adult age. The willingness to engage in dialogue is the measure and the strength of that general renewal which must be carried out in the Church.[86]

The integrated interreligious dialogue began in full flesh in 1950 when the world Council of Churches (W.C.C.) and the Vatican held encounters with representatives of other faiths. In 1960 the Second Vatican Council conspicuously took a major step forward in Christian openness to inter-religious dialogue and concentrated on awareness and understanding of Dialogue through publishing of reports, articles and books through the media.

IV. The Journal of Ecumenical Studies (JES):

A scholarly periodical devoted to religious dialogue, the original subtitle of the Journal was "Protestant, Catholics, Orthodox", which was dropped in its second year when the journal took its first non-Christian Associate Editor, Rabbi Arthur Gilbert. Over the next 3years JES continued to expand the dialogue, adding Muslim, Hindu and Baddish Associate Editors so that the initial dialogue among Christians quickly spread to dialogue among all religions and beyond to all ideologies, cultures and social institutions. The discipline of Inter-religious dialogue is that all human beings are the creation of God and the Lord has fashioned each of the created beings with different talents and qualities. Thus

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[85] Leonard Swidler, "The History of Inter-Religious Dialogue", p. 8
[86] Ibid, p. 8

all creation is precious to the Lord. To save the creation and keep the world in peace and harmony we need to come to dialogue which became a public voice at the inter-religious encounter of 1893, the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago.

With the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, Samuel Huntington came with a different opinion that the world has decided to conform in a Clash of civilization. Thus the world moved into the age of global dialogue, during the same period 1990-92 Huntington came with twelve books dealing with inter-religious dialogue.

Six years later with the attack by Al Qaeda on America's twin towers on 9/11/2007, the world realized that only dialogue can heal the human wounds, rebuild bridges and mend the broken hearts, can bring love, consent, affection and brotherhood. Because at the heart of dialogue is love, unity and humanity. Thus on 13th October 2007 Islamic scholars and religious leaders from whole universe embraced the global inter-religious dialogue in a massive rally, with 138 Muslim scholars and religious leaders from around the world and they invited Christian leaders and scholars to join with them in dialogue. On the stage of world inter-religious Dialogue, king Abdullah of Saudi Arabia met Pope Benedict XVI; he launched a world conference and dialogue with all the religions of the world in Spain and established the King Abdullah Centre for the study of contemporary Islam and the dialogue of civilization within Imam University, Riyadh, at Saudi Arabia. The message is: "If you wish to be a serious Muslim in the contemporary world, you need to be involved in dialogue with the other religions of the world."[87]

 In 2009 King Abdullah sent fourteen professors of Islamic culture from Imam University to study dialogue and democracy with the Dialogue institute. Inter-religious, intercultural, International, many agnostics and atheists are recognizing the importance of the exploding inter-religious dialogue and want to be part of it. Muslim World League and the World Muslim Congress together with Christian organizations have established both formal and informal structures and programmers for Muslim Christian dialogue.

V. Reasons for the Rise of Dialogue:

Today, as the world trade has been expanding massively, there are numerous reasons for this most radical shift. Since 18th century, Christendom has been undergoing a major epistemological shift in perspective. Where the western notion of truth was largely

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[87] Ibid, pp. 9-10.

absolute, static, monogenic and exclusive, it has since become dynamic and dialogic or relational. More than two millennia ago some Hindu and Buddhist thinkers asserted a non-absolutistic epistemology, yet there wasn't any significant impact on the Western cultural or scientific and technological worldview. Since the middle of the 19th century, eastern thought has become increasingly well known in the west and proportionately influential.[88] This knowledge appears to be increasing geometrically in recent decades in six different ways:

a) Hypothetical assumption:

Before the 19th century truth for Europe was a proclamation of reality, absolute, static and exclusive. Thus the notion of truth was based on the Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction that is, a thing cannot be true and not true at the same time. Thus the Truth was determined in a way of exclusion, e.g., A was A because it could not be shown to be not-A at the same time. However, later other scholars perceived many other statements about the truth. Scholars argued that statements were only true when placed in their former situation.[89]

b) Intentionality:

Max Scheler added a corollary to this chronicle of knowledge which concerned the future; such scholars find the truth as having an element of intentionality at its base as being oriented unlimitedly towards action implementation. They argued to perceive certain things as questions to be answered to get specific knowledge. This is a statement to be understood in relationship to the action oriented intention of the speaker.

c) Social attitude:

Scholars like Karl Mannheim began to see the class and gender of the thinker-speaker as de-absolutized by cultures, class and regardless of time. Thus all reality was said to be perceived from the perspective of the perceiver's own world view.

d) Limitation of language:

According to Ludwig Wittgenstein and many thinkers, any statement about the truth of things can be at most only a partial description of the reality. Reality could be seen from

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[88] Ibid, Cf., pp. 10-11.
[89] Ibid, Cf., p. 11.

almost any number of perspectives, whereas human language can express things from only one perspective at a time, e.g., if a question is asked in legal thought-categories, answer will be received in legal categories, that will not necessarily answer questions of empirical reality; if we deal with religious questions we deal with the truth of the meaning in which the interpreter is basically involved and reflects the perspective character of all such statements. Thus limited and limiting, the liberating quality of language in talk of transcendent, is by definition that which goes beyond our experience.[90]

e) Hermeneutics:

According to Hans Georg Gadamer, Bernard Lonergan and Paul Riceour all knowledge of a text and interpretation tend to be absolute claims about the true meaning of the text, but the basic insight goes beyond knowledge of text and applies to all knowledge.

f) Dialogue:

In Dialogue I learn, not by being passively open or receptive, but with excremental reality. I not only hear or receive reality, but I also think first of all, and speak to reality. I ask it questions, I stimulate it to speak back to me, to answer my questions. In the process I give reality the specific categories and language in which to respond. The notion of rationality, which all expressions of reality are in some fundamental way related to, applies to speaker and listener. It is while accepting this view that we move with our analysis.

> When the speaking, the responding, grows less and less understandable to me, if the answers I receive are sometimes confused and unsatisfactory, then I probably need to learn to speak a more appropriate language when I put questions to reality.[91]

The significant meaning of dialogue is, "*I can learn from you and from others*". Dialogue opens our senses to tell us the ultimate implication of life and how to live at peace with other religions in our times. When small groups of men assembled into larger groups it formed cities, thus each civilisation/culture had at its heart a religion that expressed that civilization and culture. All these ancient religious beliefs were principal religions in those times and were connected with the civilisations or the state; however, conflicts and wars have taken place all over the universe in the name of religion. Religious motives are justified by the mutually contradictory claims of the various religions.

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[90] Ibid, Cf., p. 12.
[91] Ibid, p. 13

It appears that behind the 'clash of civilization' there stands the 'clash of religions' for this reason discussion of the world religion runs the risk of being drawn into such conflicts.[92]

The world religions and the world have accepted the challenge and it is a mission to promote discourse between the world religions and withdraw the conflicts between them. These types of discourse contribute to the mission of the world, promoting and encountering the world from different religious angles.

VI. Religions and Inter-religious dialogue:

From ancient time onwards we know that religious instruction was given by the adherents, was always instructed by the insider, e.g., Judaism was taught to Jews by Jews, whereas nowadays Judaism is taught in the Paris University, Oxford and in the Cambridge University by Christian scholars, in the same way Islam is taught by Christian scholars in Paris and Christianity at Al-Khasar in Cairo. The religion of the educator/scholar for this, for Christianity there was 'Theology' and for Islam '*kalam*'. By the end of the eighteenth century, Western progress on the critical scientific disciplines, after studies such as history, sociology, psychology etc., studies of religion *Religion-swissenschaft*[93] came into existence.

Religion was studied and analysed in the department of Theology, thus in the Western countries Christian theology was taught. Whereas the Temple University was pioneered to create a Department of Religion in 1964 and they collected academicians who were critics of the religions they were teaching, in addition to professors whose approach was more Religions-wissenschaft. Thus the world religions were examined and instructed by critical scholars who knew the religions substantially well from outside. There must be a time when the religions' insiders come together to conceive from each other, the others faith and why.

The primary aim of inter-religious dialogue is to find out the ultimate meaning of life that the believers do not know from their own religious experience. There are many philosophical, socio-scientific and religious issues that come up in inter-religious dialogue that have to be studied in university or elsewhere to understand the others better. In

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[92] Peter Koslowski, "The Conflict of Religion and the Mission of a Philosophy of the World Religions: Introduction", *The Concept of God, the Origin of the World, and the Image of the Human in the World Religions*, (ed.) Peter Koslowski, (Hannover Germany: Springer Science+business Media, B.V., 2001), p.1.

[93] Leonard Swidler, "The History of Inter-Religious Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue,* (ed.), Catherine Cornille, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), pp. 13-14.

comparative religion scholars find alike phenomena from religions laid side by side and draw conclusions from such comparison. It did not per se promote inter-religious dialogue, but it is to be practicable in dialogue. Thus comparative religion provides sources for inter-religious dialogue, helping religious as well as non-religious persons and groups to understand themselves and others better, and act with greater respect for one's own religion and for others'. It has come to apply these resources from Religious wissenschaft and other places to that respectful learning encounter with other religions that is the definition of inter-religious dialogue.[94]

VII. Terms and Conditions for Inter-religious Dialogue:

Dialogue can be used in many ways, from determining peaceful co-existence and friendly substitutes to the teaching and practices of the others and from co-operation towards social changes to common worship and participation in the ritual life of others. Each of these different types of dialogue involves differing sets of responsibilities. Socio-political context will play an important role in promoting peaceful co-existence. Common worship requires a particular conception of the nature and goal of worship and recognition of the authenticity and effectiveness of the ritual practices of the other, each tradition discovers in their teachings and traditions a religious motivation to engage in dialogue with other religions. Dialogue is oral communication and exchange of thoughts and ideas in which associates decide to listen and learn from each other. First there is epistemological humility and second hospitality toward the truth of the other religions, two significant conditions which are strengthened in dialogue, believing that the other religions communicate the same ultimate truth and question in a reciprocally relevant manner that one may realize the teaching and practices of another religion in a way that may open one's own religion to fresh understandings. Commitment, interconnection and respect, these processes apply equally to any religious tradition in dialogue, their expression may differ, yet we have to consider them in the light of the sources available, thus each religion has to find out the teachings and customs to engage and motivate in dialogue with other religions.[95]

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[94] Ibid, pp. 14-15.

[95] Catherine Cornille , "Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue,* (ed.), Catherine Cornille , (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), pp. 20-21.

a) Humility:

The first essential procedure for inter-religious dialogue is acknowledgement of the hypothesis of change and growth within one's own tradition, a humble recognition in which ultimate truth is grasped and expressed within one's religion. Such humility may be applied to doctrines, rituals and Ethical systems that one may still grow in expressing the fullness of truth. Most religions exhibit a combination of unquestionable teaching, instructions and rules; to be sure every religion is subject to existent, cultural changes, developments and to internal conflict, but current interpretations preserve the original and unchangeable truth that was revealed. Such epistemological humility goes against the grain of most religious self-understanding. Religions incline to claim the absolute truth to the highest aim. Most religions refer to a transcendent source for their central teaching and traditions, that basis for religions certainty.[96] This creates commitment and surrender, which most religious believe as the basis for religious fervour as well as spiritual growth. Whereas for other religions the situation of absoluteness is on specific doctrines that must be received by faith; and for still others it involves ritual or rules in their day-to-day life that are to be followed strictly. Thus all religions are subject to historical, ethnical, social changes and improvements; thereby comes internal conflict and split.

Epistemological humility needs a change in religious self-understanding; some religions are ready to know the limits for affirmation to the absolute and final truth. Mahayana Buddhism stands on the explicit identification of language in conveying ultimate truth, Christian concept of eschatological provision, theoretically stands to identify historical forms with ultimate reality. The epistemological humility in distinct religions is mysticism, as far as it admits the impassibleness of fully conveying the experience of the ultimate reality. This distinction among the approaches to the ultimate reality and the finite categories, in which it is conveyed, may come to strengthen epistemological humility and acceptance. This affirmation of the transcendence of ultimate reality may serve the foundation for doctrinal humility openness to the possibility of development and change one's belief in ultimate truth.

The second ground for doctrinal humility is in historical, critical and scientific social study of religion. This approach to religious teachings and practices is regarded as dangerous by those who seek to protect the adherence to the teachings of a specific tradition. The

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[96] Ibid, pp. 21-22.

historical critical methods stress on the revolutionary transcendence of ultimate truth that can take to relativism and propositional nature of all religious belief in the effectiveness of all practice. The finite nature of religions, does not lead to relativism, historical and cultural contexts. There are ambiguities in religious tenets, nevertheless they hold on to their truth and superiority, such religious conviction does not make for doctrinal humility nor does it damage religious belief.[97]

b) Commitment:

Commitment to a particular religious tradition or purely personal consideration of the teaching of different religious traditions for spiritual enrichment. Speaking from a particular religion plays a significant role, both for the partners in dialogue and for the religion itself, for the partners it offers a sense of confidence that it is not a personal opinion but rather a whole tradition of reflections. Act of responsibility to a particular tradition in dialogue involves attesting not only to the contents but also the truth of particular teaching. This touches the much disputed question of the relationship between dialogue and mission. Learning from another religion through dialogue may be described as an expression of weakness or insufficiency. This leaves individuals engaged in dialogues in the margins of their respective traditions by necessity or choice. Thus the participants should willingly and humbly engage in dialogue with official representatives of the tradition.

Representing a whole religious practice in dialogue seems frightening, since it involves various reservations: i) Dialogue take place between individuals located amongst particular sub-customs of religions. E.g., dialogue doesn't takes place between a Muslim and a Buddhist, but between a Shia Muslim and a Tibetan Buddhist, or between a non-Baptist Christian and a conservative Jew, ii) dialogue doesn't assume comprehensive familiarity with the custom, but the basic knowledge and understanding of religious customs, teaching may be allowed. Through the dialogue one may gain a deeper knowledge of one's own religious beliefs and customs as one attempt to answer examining questions raised by the other religious members.[98]

The specific tradition in dialogue participation gives witness as well as specific teachings of that particular religion. This pertains to the most disputed question of the human

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[97] Ibid, p. 22
[98] Ibid. p. *23*

relationship between dialogue and mission: in dialogue there is a friendly exchange of information about their religious beliefs and practices, whereas mission and evangelization involves convincing the other of the truth of those religious teachings and practices. Thus the principal purpose of dialogue is development in search of truth; dialogue is conceived as a kind of mutual and reciprocal testifying human relation in society. Traditions have a significant role for those involved in dialogue. Tradition gives discernment of insights gained in dialogue and the fruits of the dialogue to be experienced by the universe. Since some religions have an instructing authority, they may or may not support inter-religious dialogue, whereas others do not have a clear system of doctrinal evidence, thus very often, it becomes a challenge. Therefore in inter-religious dialogue the obligation of participants is willingness to openly and humbly touch the larger tradition in dialogue and on the part of official spokesman of the traditions, give boost toward the fruits of the dialogue.

c) Inter-connection:

Often religions connect together for common causes, to handle cases of poverty, hunger, homelessness, war or natural disasters, it is mandatory for them to engage with one another in practical terms and connect on a basic human need. Dialogue between religions requires a sense of inter-connection which is intrinsic to the religions themselves. Mystical experiences have been regarded as a meeting point between religions. This co-operation leads to further dialogue for moving in social action in the concept of the ideal community, communicating the pursuit of social change. Co-operation leads to establishment of a level of belief and friendly relationship that is necessary for further constructive exchange.

Nevertheless dialogue does not always lead to the true sharing of religious faith and practices because: i) the exchange among the members of different religions may never go to the concrete matters at hand; ii) True beginning of dialogue remains subject to the existence of the common external crisis. True dialogue involves a sense of interconnection to the religions themselves, some interconnection in an experience common to all religions required, for example the mystical experiences, that is a point of agreement between all religions. Robert Forman says:

> All religious traditions derive from or are oriented toward the same mystical experience. This common experience provides a reason for engaging in dialogue as well as the goal of dialogue.[99]

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[99] Quoted in Catherine Cornille, "Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue,* (ed.), Catherin Cornille, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), p.25.

Subsequently all religious are partial communications of this same reality. Therefore dialogue between many religions is considered as the only way to develop towards this ultimate reality that is closest to the truth. The notion of an inter-connection within religious traditions is not common to all religions, there are some limitations; aiming at an all religions meet in a common experience is a challenging task. Thus, to keep a common aim and a sense of inter-connection based on the concrete beliefs of any particular religion is essential for a fruitful dialogue. Not the common experience but the conviction that all sentient beings possess, Buddha's nature which will form the basis for engaging other religions from Buddhist view, just as Christians will need to believe that the Biblical God is also revealed in another form in the texts and teachings of other religions. The possibility of constructive inter-religious tradition involves progressing towards a religious self-understanding in which the teachings of the other are someway related to or relevant for one's own religious conception of truth. The different religions will have different concepts of how they are connected to other religious traditions, through these different ways dialogue takes place.[100]

d) Empathy:

Dialogue between religions considers the opportunity of understanding one another across religious traditions. For this epistemological condition for dialogue there should be significant discussion and debate in the study of religion and the meaningful condition is self-evident. If one member is lacking in knowledge of his/her own religion, then dialogue may not bring any new insight and experience, the constructive dialogue may not require perfect understanding of the other religion's belief, but should have some ability to know one's own religion as well as have the imagination to go beyond the categories of one's religious belief and to have some understanding and empathy with religious teaching and practices of others as well.

The histories of religions were written by individuals who were not given proper linguistic and historical competency. There is no a priori reason to doubt the possibility of intellectually understanding the texts, teachings, practices and philosophical traditions of another tradition. Empathy is a highly elusive attitude and skill that plays a significant role in dialogue; empathy transposes into the mental lives of others and the experience of foreign consciousness. Most empathy requires an analogical understanding and ability to

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[100] Ibid, pp. 25-26.

relate a particular teaching and practice to one's received religious experiences, since one's religious tradition plays a significant role in inter-religious empathy. The empathic understanding of the other is not limited to the religious experience and insight which one's religious tradition has already given, for example to the despair of Jesus of Nazareth in Gethsemane. Max Scheler argues that:

> This experience can be understood and shared regardless of our historical, racial and even human limitations. And for every candid heart which steeps itself in that desolation it operates, not as a reminder or revival of personal sufferings, great or small, but as the revelation of a new and greater suffering hitherto undreamed of.[101]

e) Hospitality:

The recognition of truth in other religions presupposes some humility about the truth of one's tradition, commitment to a tradition which exercises hospitality, openness in a general sense to the interconnection within religions and better understanding of the other religious beliefs. The hospitality for knowing the truth that is revealed in another's religious beliefs doesn't need any acknowledgement or merging truth in all religions, which is impossible. The pluralist intellectual joined in the dialogue amongst the religions rejects neither use of religious particulars nor the process of proposing generic and neutral norms agreed by all the participants in dialogue. Religious traditions substitute the revealed criteria achieved by the human reason and arrangement. Thus it is approved that every religion receives others on the basis of their own special criteria and norm. The reciprocal view is that certain equality between religions is established. It is not clear always which set of criteria indicates the essence of a particular religious tradition and are to be called upon to assess the particular religious teaching and practice. Most of the criteria operative in the process of dialogue is observed in the negative reaction to the appeal of certain teaching and practices.[102]

VIII. Inter-religious Dialogue and Comparative Theology:

In comparative studies of any topic and particularly religions, one should not be biased or hold views that the former is in any absolute way more significant than the latter. Similarly in formal dialogue, one has to keep distance and commitment to comparative studies of theology. Thus the work of organizers of Formal Dialogues is best achieved if the invited

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[101] Quoted in Catherine Cornille, "Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue", p. 27.
[102] Ibid. Cf., pp. 28-30.

guests are broad and open-minded, not particularly learned about the other religious traditions involved but all the more eager to listen and learn. Dialoguing with religious leaders is best left to other religious leaders and their delegates, an authority that speaks confidently of the particular religious belief and the traditions. Today education is a great field for dialogue and controversy, often across religious boundaries hence there should be in-depth studies done to the particular religious-beliefs and traditions. Comparative education is a robust form of inter-religious learning that will not lead to confusion and not separated from inter-religions dialogue. When we live with the people of various religious traditions and beliefs, we are reminded that religions flourish in the lives, beliefs and activities of people living their faith in their everyday lives. Dialogue reminds us that when we speak about another religion's beliefs, then we are responsible and accountable to the other religious community, and prepared to give an account of oneself to one's own religious community.

> Inter-religious dialogue points to actual conversation, sometimes formal and academic sometimes simply interpersonal conversations among persons of different religious traditions willing to listen to one another and share their stories of faith and values. "Dialogical" or "inter-religious" theology grows out of inter-religious dialogue, as reflection aimed at clarifying dialogue's presuppositions, learning from its actual practice and communicating what

Whereas:

> Comparative theology and theological beginning to end marks acts of faith seeking understanding which are rooted in a particular faith tradition but which from that foundation, venture into learning from one or more other faith traditions. This learning is sought for the sake of fresh theological insights that are indebted to the newly encountered tradition/s as well as the home tradition.[103]

There are sufficient reasons to keep comparative theology and inter-religious dialogue close connected, yet they could be very distinguishable. For the educated people theological dialogue is not to change, they continue to represent their inborn traditions, but in fact comparative theological and inter-religious dialogue do more than listen to other, they correspond with the demands of good scholarship. Thus it is incomplete unless the theologians hear and understand the other person, how they represent the religious-beliefs of their particular traditions, if it reflects in some way the community's error, then how we can correct the traditions in the process of study, thus theological studies reflect on old and new truth is an interior dialogue.

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[103] Ibid, p. 53

According to John Sheveland, comparative inter-religious theology compares with polyphonic music as two illustrates of polyphony. Like dialogue comparative theology acknowledges differences as looking at others with hospitality, integrity and dynamics with the moral obligations of taking our fellows in dialogue seriously and not isolating them. There are two characteristics of polyphony: identification of difference and intelligibility.[104]

Comparative theology is perceived as a mode of academic theology and a scholarly work, whereas one can have an inter-religious dialogue through learning other traditions and questioning other religions seriously it gives external expression on actual learning. Learning is not significant but success depends on conversation. In comparative theology and inter-religious dialogue, there are differences yet they are seriously learning from each other. It could be said that inter-religious dialogue is an exterior form of comparative theology. This study takes place either through speech-communication or sharing the notes of scholars, in this context comparative theology and inter-religious dialogue is not to be seen as alternatives to each other.[105]

Inter-religious dialogue and comparative theology are not exclusive or divisible. Study of another religion involves encounter and questioning of each other. To question and bring religious harmony, the term Comparative theology came into context. In 17th century James Garden, who brought up *Comparative Theology,* also called it, *the true and solid grounds of pure and peaceable Theology.* In his theory Garden explains two kinds of theology: a) Religious knowledge which discusses its object only as revealed and instituted by God, and b) The significance and observance of religious order, respect and relation. Garden's theological study identifies more significant fundamental truths and values. Garden further tells us that the common truth and values could be shared with all human beings. At the time there were different opinions among Christians and across wider religious boundaries, since the theology was a discipline by which to identify and privilege common ground. However, structural changes occurred over the centuries and today we call it ecumenical or inter-religious or inter-faith dialogue.

Comparative theology could be supported and nourished by inter-religious dialogue since comparative theology presents a genuine and satisfactory way to realize and acknowledge

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[104] Ibid, p. 53
[105] Ibid, pp. 54-55.

the otherness of the religious standing of one's own identity. Comparative theology creates a balance between openness and loyalties; it sees inter-religious encounter as an on-going conversation that can make for genuine and authentic dialogue. Comparative theologies prevent a priori and maintain understanding of others in particular before judicial decision. It is true deeper dialogical, it sets out to understand other religious traditions by researching in the light of teaching other religious traditions, thus it opens the doors for questions and its meaning in the life of the believer.[106]

In the present era, interplay of comparative theology and inter-religious dialogue is unavoidable, given the variety, dynamism and dispersion of knowledge and the frequent lack of responsibility to the tradition and to our neighbour. Religions are studied, and in the diverse culture of the West some neighbours, colleagues and students who relate to those traditions often ask about what has been written. Comparative theological interest in the West is primarily stimulated by the Christian concern; however, academic discipline, educative and academic inter-religious dialogues must be well grounded in pluralism.

Scriptural reading is frequently shared in small groups of Jews, Christians and Muslims who co-operate in reading chosen passages of the texts of the three different traditions. It is done so that among them there may be deeper insight and mutual understanding may evolve. Scriptural reading vibrates with comparative theology; here the purpose is scriptural sharing and reading, based on a starting point. Here the traditions, culture and reasoning peculiar to each are shared. Comparative theology is limited to a reading of several texts at a time; it is an activity that could be reproduced and improved upon and tested with other texts, because it is social in a limited sense that the expressions of different traditions may be heard together, where there is neither modification nor generalization based on the expectations of the other, no decided model in which its meaning could be predicted. These same virtues of both scriptural reasoning and comparative theology often apply in inter-religious dialogue as well, where changeability and a resistance to expressed decisions raise the wished substitutes.

Is Inter-Religious Dialogue drifting by Comparative Theology? Many a time the question comes as to whether comparative theology can alter the mind set of inter-religious dialogue. In the dialogue we gain one benefit that participants will be generally informed about their own tradition and culture, not about the other traditions at the table. If

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[106] Ibid, pp. 55-56.

comparative theology has been experienced by those engaged in dialogue, they will know about the other traditions, they will assimilate learning and bring into dialogue their own traditions. Comparative theology may strengthen the persons who participate in inter-religious dialogue so that it is no longer superficial, since the participants are learned not only in their own tradition and but also that of the others and the dialogues are immediate and concretely developed for success. Comparative theology may decrease the importance of inter-religious dialogue by suggesting that the dialogue is not to be the principal source of selective information about the other traditions. Developmental human knowledge is always considered and dialogue is a means of gaining it. After comparative theology one must learn to pursue the dialogue otherwise.

IX. Philosophy and Inter-religious Dialogue:

The philosophical religious-dialogue may replace the clash of refinement and religious beliefs, and significance is attached to philosophy as the medium of communication within the religions-beliefs. It should promote deactivation of religious conflicts and favour inter-religious dialogue. Philosophy stands tall amongst the different religions since philosophy contains discipline as well as a critique of religion and refuses to tolerate superstition and wrong consciousness. Ancient philosophy asked early Christianity to verify their fundamental belief in relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church verified this to the relationship to individual and political liberty. Also Christianity used philosophy for a deeper influence of communication of the faith and its defence against people of other religious beliefs. The two fold substance of philosophy for religion as establishing discipline and as critique makes it worthwhile patronising philosophy for the conversation concerning the universal religious beliefs, for the discussion of its foundational structure and its application. However one special philosophical tradition that has been generated historically, that is Western philosophy, should not be made the stand of non-Christian religions; instead, philosophy should be understood in the most universal sense of rational communication, based on the highest discourses of inter-religious dialogue.[107]

The knowledge and information adherents have of their own religion and that of others is intellectually and philosophically insufficient; we need to attend intellectual lectures and dialogues. Thus the most significant feature of dialogue and the most difficult in Inter-

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[107] Peter Kosloswski, "Philosophy as Mediator between Religions", *Philosophy Bridging the World Religions,* (ed.), Peter Kosloswski (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1985), p. 1

religious dialogue is the eagerness to consider the incompleteness of one's own definition of truth and to learn from the other. Dialogical intention can also be seen as a part of the paradigm shift that is taking place in our culture, as previous modes of knowing and communicating lack the requisite qualities or resources to respond to current realities. In recognition of the inclination we have toward dogmatism and debate, thoughtful guidelines for engaging with others in dialogue have been offered by many theoreticians.

Dogmatism or rationalising/reasoning may be valuable in pre-supposition, and our reasoning can be infallible in its own conditions, the knowledge via reason. According to Kant the critiquing of reason is in a position to say exactly as the self-critique, how far knowledge attempts the reality and how much reason can reason out the truth? When will it be true knowledge? Another fact of enlightenment's faith in reason, here the reason is significant for the reality as a whole. Whereas reason is not totality of reality but only a part of it is real and all reality is not rational. Thus reason alone cannot decide the criteria of revelation, also human reason to be irrational and thus unreal.[108]

The great and the major religions of the world are not chiefly based on reason and experience but on the apocalypse or revelation, history and the religious doctrines which are revealed to them that can't be known outside the divine-revelation, thus the divine-revelation narratives of the religions can't be ignored, by philosophy as fabrications; it should be temporarily and conditionally accepted by philosophy as objects of research and must be taken as what they claim to be God Himself revealed in the world. The reality of this could be challenged by the critique of religion, because the approval of this event is ultimately a matter of religious belief. Yet philosophy can't be as a philosophic system to impose on religions what they must believe and what they must exclude as irrational from their doctrinal systems of dogmatic belief. Science and philosophy cannot be thought of as a critique and termination of religions, because science and philosophy do not provide operative equivalents for central areas of religious effectuation, such as religious cult and liturgy. The relation of religions to science and philosophy may not be understood as relation of abolition for another reason, because it is not true as Max Scheler has shown in confrontation of Auguste Comte and Hegel that science substitutes religion that historically sublets as it were into science.

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[108] Ibid, pp. 3-4.

X. Religious Pluralism and Critique:

The rising integration of the universal efficiency of economic system as well as a multinational deal, the pluralism of religions and its relation to the development of cultural pluralism becomes evident. Since religious belief and culture are invariably associated, culture's explanations are centrally expressed in and shaped by its religious belief. The pluralism of religious belief is related to the pluralistic cultures. Religious pluralism is a development of cultural pluralism. The fact of the plurality of world explanations and religion cannot be denied. However when we speak about the doctrine of multiculturalism, that makes sense, since several different cultures peacefully co-exist equitably in a single country rather than one national culture, however, in the recognition of difference one simultaneously seeks ways to reach at an actual dialogue of religious belief and cultures. In this way religious pluralism can be successful only if it is realized that behind the multiculturalism of religious belief a generality in religious belief exists; an inter-cultural dialogue above and beyond religious pluralism and multiculturalism. Pure multiculturalism excludes from the start the idea that could go beyond plurality to something which is common to the plural abstract entity.

The dialogue of religious-belief must be an inter-religious dialogue and not just multi-religious discussion. They should recommend an acceptance of the potentiality that some common factors among the religious-beliefs could be realized. The Radical religious pluralist admits five world religious-beliefs as specified facts, without the potential of theological and philosophical discussion among them; at the same time a form of revolutionary criticism of religion, does not acknowledge them cognitively and sees them as just forms of the communication of cultural variety.

According to C. G. Jung's observance of religions, they are exceedingly improbable, all asserts are relatively unreal. Its improbable claims last for a long time. In the case of religious-belief, we have opposite, for to Jung: faith in exceedingly improbable events bears for an improbably long time that speaks for the truth of religious belief. Thus in the view of human encounters that come down with the religions from long periods of time. The plurality of religions is a variety of cognitively undesirable forms of cultural

expression, however, not an epistemological discussion, but a meta-epistemological discussion.[109]

XI. Destination of the Inter-religious Dialogue:

When there is intercommunication between the members of two unlike religious beliefs or ideologies, it means there is definitely two-way communication between two different personalities. Dialogue must contain the impression that neither side has a total appreciation of truth of the subject but both needs to seek further. After more or less extensive dialogue, the two sides should agree totally on the subject discussed. Thus dialogue is the means of learning the new truth where both sides agree on the subject.[110]

Dialogue is a search for truth, agreement and understanding of other traditions, cultures and human nature, not necessarily agreeing with its doctrines, but ready to create a common ground in order to proceed. The primary function of inter-religious dialogue is to promote greater understanding between the world religions and the people of other faiths. The scholarly discussion between representatives of religious groups will clarify the areas of agreement and disagreement in belief and practice. Honest disagreement is essential to fruitful inter-religious dialogue. One should not compromise the scriptures in the course of dialogue; the members of other religions will be equally devoted to their beliefs for which Leslie Newbigin believes that the unity and creativity of inter-faith dialogue depends, in the first place, upon the extent to which the various associates take seriously the whole reality of their faiths as sources for the understanding of the entirety of experience. Thus dialogue without give and take would be unproductive. Effective dialogue enables participants to identify correctly, areas of genuine religious disagreement, as well as identify misconceptions regarding the beliefs and practices of different religions. To recognize the crucial issues that divide human beings, for the conversations to be fruitful and honouring to God, the participants should not misrepresent the religion but always speak the truth to each other with love and respect, share the gospel message with others.

Inter-religious dialogue has unfolded many factors and has experienced many changes in the beginning of the 21st century. Increasing pluralism and globalization, challenges to

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[109] Ibid, pp. 2- 3
[110] Leonard, Swidler, "The Importance of Dialogue", *Trialogue: Jews, Christians and Muslims in Dialogue,* (ed.), Leonard Swidler, Duran Khalid and Firestone Reuven, (New London: Twenty-Third Publication, 2007), p. 6.

proselytizing, nuclear weapons and arms, a rapid increase in number of deadly weapons, failures of modern science and world views to understand ecological imperatives, ethical and Sectarian conflicts, increased understanding of conflict regulations: out of these and other factors have come the new desire for understanding of others, an intensified search for meaning across old boundaries and the need for respectful conversation between participants who are different. It is also impossible for anyone religion to exist in isolation and ignore the others, thus discussion with other religions is essential for the sake of peace, harmony and co-existence in the world. It does become something like a mirror in which we perceive ourselves. In the process of replying to the questions of our associate we have to look into our traditions and our-selves, and thus come to know ourselves better. As human beings we are always in relationship with others, and are likely to impact each other. It is part of the reality and is part of us all. Through being in dialogue with other cultures, we know our own. [111]

The present century is the time of computer, technology and exponential development of global communication. Globalization has led to an open market, free movement of people from one country to another and a mingling of different religious communities. Our response to them and their traditions is important to an understanding of the reality that surrounds us. Today we are in a diverse and complex society; in this changing pluralistic environment one has to transform the world and choose to be an active and vital part of the globalised society. Therefore the urgent growing necessity is to understand and to know others' adherence and their religious belief and be familiar with their philosophical and theological doctrines.

Today we must learn to live with the neighbour, not merely in toleration but in peaceful and respectful relationship which involves all the parties, religious or other denominations. Dialogue is necessary to assert a meaningful voice in the world, as we are in a world of abundant diversity and need to overcome our fear and mature in the presence of world religions, seeing this as an opportunity rather than a problem. As long as it is non-confrontational and open-minded, inter-religious dialogue provides opportunities to grow in appreciation of the abundance of other traditions while maintaining the integrity of one's own commitment. Dialogue enhances apologetics and discernment for better understanding the beliefs and practices of other religions. This enables us to both identify and

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[111] Ibid, p.15

contextualize the teachings of other religions, and to present a reason for the difference in their beliefs. Dialogue helps us to understand the other person, their traditions and their teaching of the scripture much better, in the Holy Bible Jesus says:

> "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with your mind; and your neighbour as yourself."[112]

Terry Muck succinctly states the function of inter-religious dialogue: in situations where hostility is not present, where there is mutual expectation, inter-religious dialogue is not just allowed, but the world situation demands it. Ultimately, inter-religious dialogue is looking for global peace, harmony and co-existence and for the survival of the global eco-system; each act we take in the name of inter-religious matters we must do cautiously and peacefully. Peace is not easily accomplished and entered into. The process may be peaceful but it is like climbing Mount Everest. Peace doesn't occur in a day or night. For this the adherents of two different faiths come together and share the aspects of their respective faiths and struggle to understand what is foreign**.** The Theologians can write papers and publish them in international journals and convene meetings to discuss the finer theological issues related to inter-religious dialogue. Here perhaps the members of one faith tradition can join with members of another religion to improve a neighbourhood.

There may be various levels and forms of dialogues, engaged in for many reasons. Ecumenical disharmony may occur even within a religious movement, for example, different Christian protestant denominations with the Roman Catholic Church, inter-faith dialogue is needed between Sunni and Shiite and different Muslim denominations as well as different Judaic denominations; such dialogue has to take place at the official level. Further progress is required in inter-religions dialogue between the Vatican and Jewish religious high ranking leaders. Scholarly dialogues or comparing and contrasting diverse traditions, ideas and world views can facilitate understanding; and thematic dialogue to explore ethical approaches, religious wisdom and solutions to common problems such as violence or environmental crises can also help. The dialogue of heart, levelling out in worship, in the presence of the Divine, the hand seeking collaboration in projects and advocacy are what the World Congress of Faiths seeks.[113]

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[112] The Holy Bible, RSV, *Luke 10:27,* (Bangalore: Collins for Theological publication, 1988), p. 68.
[113] Joel Beversluis, "Inter-Faith Dialogue: How and Why do we Speak Together", *Sourcebook of the World's Religions*, (ed.), Joel Beversluis, (California: Novato, 2000), p. 126.

XII. Dialogue and Peace:

Inter-religious dialogue provides a forum to prevent evangelism and proselytizing and thereby tries to bring peace and harmony in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. It should be viewed as an activity that complements evangelism. Inter-religious dialogue is related to evangelism in two ways: a) to understand the situation of non-believers and how the Scripture answers their needs and b) answer the questions raised by people. To involve them in a personal encounter with the claims of God, this relation of dialogue is seen in The Holy Bible.

a) Biblical Basis for Inter-religious Dialogue:

The Bible does not directly address inter-religious dialogue as it is understood and practiced today. The Greek word *dialegomai*, which appears in Acts 17:17 and Jude 9, says it thoroughly, *Discuss in argument or exhortation.* Thus the New Testament writers were using *dialegomai* to describe a practice of discussion following the proclamation of the Gospel. The Bible gives several examples of affirmed inter-religious conversation. For example Child Jesus spent three days in the temple: "After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions."[114]

Discussing religious issues with the temple authority, Jesus engaged with the teachers and the religious authorities on various issues, and all of them were amazed at his responses to their questions. Discussing certain involved insights from Jesus which would have been understood by the teachers as exceeding the common boundaries of contemporary Judaism could be considered as inter-religious dialogue. The system of education through questioning was common among Jews and Greeks, the rabbinic method of teaching involved mutual questioning and discussion. Earlier the philosopher Socrates used the same method; today it is called *Socratic dialogue.* This mutual discussion is the essence of inter-religious dialogue. That also fulfils answering questions that involve others in a personal encounter with God.

St. Paul's discourse on Mars hill in Athens demonstrates an occasion of getting together in inter-religious dialogue, short of avoiding any contact with the idolatrous practices of the Athenians. Paul observed very closely and used these practices as the beginning for presenting his beliefs. Paul debated with the devout Jews; he beheld the practices of the

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[114] The Holy Bible, RSV, *Luke 2:46*, (Bangalore: Collins for Theological publication, 1988), p. 56.

people outside his religious community and investigated religions of Athenians to identify their spiritual state and to present the new religion in a manner accessible to them. Paul used the knowledge that he obtained through direct interaction with the professionals of the Athenian philosophies and religions. He shows that Christians can acknowledge truth in other religions without accepting entirety of the religion as true, acknowledging the limited truth which the Athenians held does not mean denying the supremacy of God's full revelation in Christ. Through the clarification of other religions that results from inter-religious dialogue, evangelists are able to express their beliefs, so that they will be correctly understood by people of other religions and cultures.

b) Apologetics for Inter-religious Dialogue:

Inter-religious dialogue does not mean a debate nor does it mean that there is no place for addressing conflicting or incorrect religious claims. Every religious community has intellectual representatives. They are typically engaged, among other things, in the formulation and defence of doctrines of the community which may be incompatible with those of another. When these representative intellectuals of a particular community judge this to be the case, they should respond apologetically. The leaders of the unlike religious communities are responsible for defining orthodox doctrine. These doctrines frequently contradict the doctrines of other religious communities. For inter-religious dialogue to be effective, the participants must be allowed to make doctrinal claims. Participants may criticize abstemiously the doctrinal claims of other religions and defend their claims when criticized, such criticism and defence must be done in a respectful manner that improves the clarification of beliefs and practices while bringing better understanding of the similarities and difference between religions.

c) Necessity of Voluntary Involvement:

Dr Leonard Swidler, a systematic theologian, co-founder of the Journal of Ecumenical Duties in Vatican II in 1964, dealt, in the journal's first issue, with the problems of Christians and the Jewish disinterest in Christ and their suspicion of Christian's historical anti-Semitism. Dr Swidler, in his co-edited book *;"Death or Dialogue?" From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue"* argues that we should leave the age of monologue and assume the dialogue age to escape the death which follows by fear, distrust resentment, and hatred. This discussion opened the door to consideration of the relation with other religions. In his book 'Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for inter-religious, inter-

ideological Dialogue' he gives a variation of the Ten Commandments, which was summarized by the Inter-faith Dialogue Association of Grand Rapids as:

> i) Dialogue to learn to change and to grow and act accordingly, ii) Dialogue to share and receive from others, iii) Dialogue with honesty and sincerity, iv) Dialogue comparing ideals with ideals and practice with practice, v) Dialogue to define yourself and to learn the self-definition of others, vi) Dialogue with no hard and fast assumptions about someone else's belief, vii) Dialogue to share with equals, viii) Dialogue in trust, ix) Dialogue with willingness to look at your beliefs and traditions critically, x) Dialogue seeking to understand the other person's beliefs from within.[115]

If we are to prevent the violence that follows from fear, suspicion, interpretation, resentment and hatred we, men and women of different faiths, must along with the growing belief in the inter-religious movement have to come out to the common platform to discuss what the people of faith can do together for peaceful living. Much of our energy has to go to create a readiness in members of different religious groups to meet regularly. We have to educate them to overcome ignorance and hostility and the task is to encourage different religious believers to know each other's company, relax with them and dispel prejudice, bias of any kind and to build up a friendly atmosphere. Thus we have to rethink our attitudes toward other faiths and their theology. David Bohm dialogued across disciplines with philosophers and scholars where he investigated deep listening to the spirit of the dialogue for himself and for others in the group. He asked people to suspend judgment and to reason, so that the conversation could focus around ideas and issues. It is more fertile for people to work together on a common platform, where friendships can form and attitudes reform, than to hold meetings and formal dialogues where defences and oneness are on alert. For the Semitic religions, non-violent advocacy for peace, justice and against oppression can be rooted in one's faith.

Pope John Paul II at the Inter-faith meeting at *Assisi World Day of Prayer for Peace* in 1986 said that many people long for the religions to be the moral conscience of humanity. Dr A.T. Ariyaratne has inspired people of all faiths to seek *sarvodaya*, a new social order which seeks the welfare of all through the inter-dependent awakening of all. Dalai Lama emphasised compassion and non-violence not only for the cause of Tibet, but for the unifying sense of universal responsibility in all people of the universe. Dr Paul Knitter asserts, that "the Concern for the widespread suffering that grips humanity and threatens

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[115] Joel Beversluis, Op. cit., p.140.

the planet can and must be, the 'common cause' for all religions."[116] Thomas Berry and Brian Swimmer have taught us how the earth and the universe exist as essential parts of the sacred community of life. Marcus Bray Brooke, using Mahatma Gandhi's talisman, suggests, "Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him." Thus the most substantial change in the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions was not *shall we meet to talk?* But *should we pray together? What shall we do?* The dialogue and co-operation is necessary, Pope John Paul II while addressing over 80,000 Muslims at a soccer stadium in Casablanca in 1985 said:

> We believe in the same God, the one God, and The Living God who created the world… In a world which desires unity and peace, but experiences a thousand tensions and Conflicts, should not believers favour friendship between the men and the Peoples who form one single community on earth? Dialogue between Christians and Muslims is today more urgent than ever. It flows from fidelity to God. Sometimes, in the past, we have opposed and even exhausted each other in polemics and in wars…I believe that today God invites us to change old practices. We must Respect each other and we must stimulate each other in good works on the path to Righteousness.[117]

Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are great and significant religions of the universe. They trace to Abraham their common origin and the spiritual tradition that is Monotheistic faith identified with him. Without peace, harmony and justice between the Semitic religions there can be no meaningful peace in the world. Thus Pope Benedict XVI said to Ambassadors from Muslim countries in 2006

> Inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims cannot be reduced to an optional extra. It is, in fact, a vital necessity, on which in large measure our future depends.[118]

The parable of the Good Samaritan in the Holy Bible Luke 10: 25-37, teaches that the call to love our neighbour does not mean only loving the person next door or a member of our own particular community. Reflecting upon the Gospel message, the Church teaching regarding inter-religious dialogue is very positive:

> The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator; in the first place among whom are the Muslims: these profess to hold the faith

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[116] Ibid, p. 128
[117] Gerard Forde, *A Journey Together*, (Ireland: Wilton, Cork, 2013), p. 9.
[118] Ibid, p. 8

of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day.[119]

The Second Vatican Council's relation to the Non-Christian Religions called Nostra Aestate has a positive attitude towards dialogue with Muslims as well as other religions. It says:

> The Church has also regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to men. They strive to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own. Although they do not acknowledge him as God, they worship Jesus as a prophet, his Virgin Mother they also honour, and even at times devoutly invoke. Further, they await the day of Judgment and the reward of God following the resurrection of the dead. For this reason they highly esteem an upright life and worship God especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting.[120]

The above document urges Christians, Muslims and Jews to strive sincerely for mutual understanding and for the common cause of safeguarding and fostering social justice, moral values, peace and freedom. For which the Vatican sponsored many meetings between Christians and Muslims, Christians and Jews. This openness to interaction reflects the Gospel call to:

> A new commandment I give to you, that you Love one another: even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.[121]

For the Muslim, Prophet Muhammad is revered and respected like no other human being. This respect is reflected in the practice of saying, *Peace and Blessings upon him* (*Salla lahu alayhi wa sallam*), each time his name is mentioned. In print this is abbreviated as *pbuh*. For Muslims the Prophet is the exemplar of true Islam, he was the perfect model of how to be Muslim. Respecting this, the letters *pbuh* will be inserted each time the name of the Prophet is mentioned in this text. Referring to the attitude that Muslims should have towards Christians as well as Jews, the Holy Quran says: "Bear, then, with patience, all that they say, and celebrate the praises of thy Lord, before the rising of the sun and before

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[119] Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents Lumen Gentium 16,* (Bombay, St. Paul Press Training School, 1992), pp. 334-335.

[120] Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Concilar Document, Nostra-Aetate* 3, p. 654.

[121] The Holy Bible, RSV, *John 13:34-35*, (Bangalore, Collins for Theological publication, 1988), p. 103.

(its) setting."[122] There are many life examples of Muhammad that give guidance to Muslims on how to be with Christians and with Jews.

> Dispute ye not with the people of the Book (Christians and Jews), except in the best way, unless it be with those of them who do wrong; but we believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you. Our God and your God is one; and it is to Him we submit.[123]

Dialogue does not mean just arguing about religion but it calls for a willingness to be open, to listen and to respect each other. Our customs, dress and food should not prevent us from mixing with each other. Willingness to set aside our own sense of religious superiority will also help us to see what is good in the faith of the others. Gaining a true appreciation of each

XIII. Obstacles to Dialogue:

There is a tendency to say that Muslims are 'terrorists or support terrorists', Christians are immoral and unjust and Jews are revengeful and insincere. One should not make such hurried generalizations. In reality more than 99% of their population is in favour of peace, unity and harmony. For successful dialogue prejudices have to be eliminated, while our interaction and communication with each other will show that such presumptions have no ground. History is marked by a variety of experiences, ranging from peaceful co-existence and co-operation to mutual vilification and armed conflict. There have been atrocities and injustices between the Semitic religions. One should have better appreciation of the other's religion rather than exaggerate flaws and have biased ideas. Prayer, fasting and part of the scripture are common to the three religions, but interpreted differently and that brings challenges into our dialogue.

Judaism believes in monotheistic God and in the prophets outlined in the *Torah* and *Tanakh* or in the Hebrew Bible. They also believe in the messianic concept, but they don't accept Jesus as the messiah for their messiah is yet to come. Some Jews believe that they are saved through the word of God which was given to them by Moses on Mount Sinai. Both Jews and Christians believe that they are praying to the same God, the *Yahweh,* and the word of God was communicated through the prophets, who were fallible, sinful people in their own ways. Jews are bound by the Mosaic Law, the Ten Commandments.

The Holy Qura, 50:39.
[123] Gerard Forde, *A Journey Together*, (Ireland: Wilton, Cork 2013), p. 13.

Christians are bound by the teaching of Jesus, namely love and forgiveness. Christians believe in the Trinitarian God, that is: God the Father who is the creator, God the Son, Jesus Christ, is the redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit is the sustainer. Through His sacrificial death on the Cross, Jesus took the sins of the world upon himself and He saved the world. On the third day He rose again, He ascended to heaven, He will come again on the last days to judge the living and the dead, thus for Christians Jesus is divine, Co-equal and co-eternal with God.

Islam is a work based religion; they believe that Muslims are saved through works. They believe that all the prophets are sinless, they believe that the Gospels were changed by early Christians, thus for them Jesus is only a prophet not a divine person, when he returns he will convert the whole world to Islam. He will marry, reign for 40 years and die and will be buried next to Muhammad in Medina. Jesus has been characterized in the Quran as the son of Mary, and no more than the Messenger of *Allah.*[124]

Jews and Christians cannot kill anybody under any circumstance. Muslims can kill non-Muslims as well as Muslims for three specific reasons outlined in the Quran, one of which is apostasy or leaving Islam. Jews and Christians are called to love their fellow man. For Muslims their true friends are no less than Allah and his messengers and the believers who launch regular prayers, charity and bow down humbly in worship could be true friends.[125] Muslims believe that Jesus is with God in heaven, he ascended into heaven, but he never died on the cross but a substitute died for him on the Cross. Thus they don't believe in the very first principle of Christianity: the Resurrection. Quran asserts that the god of Islam is the God of Christians and Jews and it is to Him we bow.

XIV. Outcome of Inter-religious Dialogue:

Dialogue can build bridges rather than walls and inter-religious dialogue aims at bringing about the understanding, mutual respect and co-operation essential for harmony in social relations. We are ignorant of each other's faith, beliefs and culture. There is a lack of communication and interactions, our relation is superficial and needs to be deepened through education for greater mutual understanding and through interaction which will build relationships and trust. In dialogue each participant remains true to their-own beliefs,

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[124] *The Holy Quran,* New Revised Edition, 4: 171, (Maryland: Amana Corporation 1989), p. 239.
[125] Ibid, *5:51, 55*, pp. 264-266.

makes a personal commitment to preparing oneself for dialogue and communicates with whole-hearted co-operation with neighbours of different faiths. One should greet their neighbours on the occasion of their feasts. Likewise one may respect customs and practices of other faiths. Use available opportunity to interact and mix with members of other communities. Introspect on what is common as the context for dialogue. Welcome members of other faiths, for community service or voluntary work, invite participation. Participate in courses or events at which one can learn more about other faiths.

World inter-religious dialogues of Christians, Jews and Muslims are not fully appreciated. The leaders who can bring about change are busy in the political and in the personal field, while those who have no faith are indifferent towards inter-religious dialogue. It is for the religious leaders to come together and to lead their faithful through proper direction. Some dogmatically want to force everyone to convert to their own religion. Some think that all religions can and should be mixed together. Many are simply afraid because of the political situation of the place. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, despite their common monotheism, have very different interpretations of God, worship and mission. Therefore it is unreasonable to claim that they worship the same God. They assume that there is one God, who is the Creator of the universe. They assume that God is sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, Holy, just and righteous. In this way Judaism, Christianity and Islam worship the same God. There are significant differences between the above mentioned religions' views of God. *Allah* is Muslim and Arabic word for God, who possesses the attributes of love, mercy and grace, *Allah* does not demonstrate His attributes in the same manner as the Biblical God acts.

The important difference between the Islamic and Christian view of God is the concept of the Trinity. Christians believe that God revealed Himself as one God in three persons that is God the Father the creator, God the Son, "Jesus Christ" as redeemer and God the Holy Spirit as the sustainer. The belief in the Trinity is essential, and without Trinity there is no incarnation of God's Son in the person of Jesus Christ. Without Jesus Christ, there is no salvation for sin. Without salvation sin condemns all to hell.

XV. Dialogical Encounters:

a) Judaism and Christianity

In America, Jewish-Christian dialogue began in the latter decades of the nineteenth century when five clergymen of each religion talked on their respective faiths; where social and

scholarly conversations took place among them. The intention was to develop co-operation between Jews and Christians and both communities showed interest and great appreciation of each other's faith. After the Second World War, the same effort was made in European countries, the most substantial being the interfaith conferences to which American Protestant religious leaders and rabbis were invited.

The world parliament of religions offered Jewish leaders like Alexander Kohut, Isaac M. Wise, and Marcus Jastrow an opportunity to present their case for Judaism. Rabbi Emil Hirsch, a reform rabbi, spoke about the need to overcome parochial differences and create one world religion, while other Jewish spokespersons defended Judaism; whereas liberal Jews and Christians were for promoting interfaith dialogue. The world parliament of religions created a unique opportunity and arrived at a common platform for the world religions, while it gave Judaism a measure of legitimacy although its immediate effect on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity was much restricted.[126]

In the early twentieth century, Jewish scholars attempted to bring out a Jewish Encyclopaedia; they invited Crawford Tony and George Moore, Christian scholars, to join in writing and editing the Encyclopaedia. It was published and partly sponsored by Christians in New York who took interest in building up inter-faith relations. The English speaking Christian tried to interpret the events and situations narrated in the Hebrew Bible and the evidence found in the Near East in a manner that was more well-disposed to the Jewish ethos about the birth of Israel as the Jewish nation. Thus the Judaic biblical academicians could find common ground with their Christian English speaking counterparts and join in mutual communication.

American Universities began to employ Jewish professors of biblical studies, and the European universities also employed Jewish professors to teach Semitic languages and the culture of the Middle East. In the nineteenth century, Jewish scholars and leaders in Germany, Britain and America defended Judaism against the unjustified defamation arising from the unwillingness of Christians to relate to Judaism as a justifiable faith. After that the first inter-faith conferences took place, whereas the Protestants accused each other and conservative Protestants strongly objected to dialogues. Ariel Yaakov writes:

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[126] Ariel Yaakov: "Jewish-Christian Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-religious Dialogue*, (ed.) Cornille Catherine, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), p. 206.

Conservative Protestant views only those persons who had accepted Jesus as their Saviour could be justified before the Lord and could expect eternal life and they were emerging at that time as a 'fundamentalist' camp, insisting that Protestants should concentrate on spreading the Christian Gospel among non-Christians instead of wasting precious time and resources on dialogues.[127]

The First World War caused a series of powerful blows to the active liberal Christians and Jews, where both communities realized the loss and came together to analyse the situation through dialogue. The liberal Catholic, Protestant and Jewish thinkers offered each other a greater amount of identity, appreciation and advances in more systematic forms of dialogue. The Catholics and Jews were often targeted by the Protestants, while the organizing committee concentrated on the improvement of the relationship between Jews and Christians as a vehicle for dialogue between representatives of Protestant, Catholic Church and Jewish clergymen and theologians. They understood that their communications should have openness and concern for both the religious communities in order to have an impact beyond theological level and potentially to enrich the relationship among Christians and Jews as well as to develop their relationship at the social and cultural level.

During the 1920s and 30s, anti-Semitism was formulated in Europe and beyond. Many German English speaking Christian groups and ministers attacked Jews, blaming them for their countries' problems. An American Catholic clergyman, Charles Coughlin, a pioneer of radio preaching, used his radio program to attack the Jews and blame them for the troubles of the ages, while Henry Ford fabricated documents charging Jews with conspiring to take over the entire world, and the protestant clergy promoted a political agenda: such as Gerald L.K. Smith, included attacks on Jews in their rhetoric, whereas conservative Christian churches continued their efforts at evangelizing Jews. The reform thinkers began to consider Christian Jewish equality as never before. Few followed Stephen Wise when he called upon Jews to adopt Jesus as one of their own, suggesting that Jews give up on their claim to be the chosen people. But Abraham Joshua Herschel acknowledges dialogue.[128]

In spite of the Holocaust of the Second World War, a number of Jewish and Christian leaders made efforts to remedy the situation, Rabbi Leo Back, scholar and leader of German Jewry during the Nazi era, initiated the first post war inter-faith open dialogue

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[127] Ibid, p. 207
[128] Ibid, pp. 208-209.

with Christians in Britain and Switzerland to convince them of the merits of Judaism.[129] James Parker and the clergymen of the Churches were involved in masterminding Christian-Jewish meeting and theological dialogue, while different countries established the World Council of Churches (WCC). This brought about ecumenical activity, this new atmosphere of greater acceptance brought theological change.

More protestant thinkers followed Niebuhr in advocating that Jews were not in need of Christian gospel, they had a vital religious tradition of their own to sustain them. During the 1950-1960s, the Presbyterian Church USA became more influential, and a growing number of protestant denominations decided that they had no more interest in allocating finance and manpower to evangelizing Jews. In New York, Presbyterian and Jewish congregations shared the same architectural space, which served as both the Village Presbyterian Church and the Village Temple, there were fewer places for the traditional Christian to substitute the system with the mission agenda.[130] There was a rising awareness among the Catholic and Protestant thinkers that theological clearing of air was necessary, clergymen of the Church of England, James Parkers was actively organising Christian-Jewish meeting and theological exchanges, expressing recognition and approval of Judaism.

Cardinal Francis Spellman, of the Catholic Church from New York, was the leader of the inter-faith dialogue and reconciliation. He has operated radio programs together with Jewish, Protestant and Catholic clergymen and the access of involvement in the dialogue was raised substantially, and the systematic dialogue was carried out by associates of the liberal wings of Jews and Christians. In the American civil right movement, black leaders and social reformers were supported by Catholics, Jews and Protestants, although the prejudices against Jews were still frequent among some Christian groups who did not take dialogue seriously.

To reform the Church in the context of contemporary culture and to bring about reconciliation between Catholic, other Christian denominations and other faiths, the Catholic general council assembled between 1962-65 called the Second Vatican Council, was originated by Pope John XXIII. The council attempted to reform the Church and change its relation to the contemporary traditional culture and to bring historical

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[129] Ibid, p. 210
[130] Ibid, pp. 210-211.

rapprochement between the Catholic Church and other religious faiths. The council attempted   to put to rest some of the old hatreds between Catholic and Christian denominations as well as other religions to promote an atmosphere of forgiveness and acceptance, especially their understanding of the Christian-Jewish relations. One of its most famous sections recognizes

> The spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews and the need "to foster and recommend...mutual understanding and respect" through, among other acts, "fraternal dialogues"(Croner 1977:1). The Council originally had no intention of making any statements about non-Christian religious communities other than Jews, but changed its position in response to objections from a variety of quarters (Aydin 2002:19). In the final version of the document, a declaration regarding Muslims is positioned even before the section treating Jews.[131]

On 26th October 1965 Pope Paul VI delivered his message *Nostra Aetate* meaning in our time, signifying a new chapter in inter-faith dialogue with Christians and Jews together for the dialogue as a new way of rapprochement between the two faiths. It made significant impact on the relationship between the two faiths, bringing great improvements in their relations to each other, encouraging forgiveness and acceptance of other faiths. Vatican II issued its historical statement on the relationship between Christianity and the other religions, *Nostra Aetate* expresses:

> The Church …cannot forget that she received the relation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant…the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accused by God' (Croner 1977: 1-2) *Nostra Aetate* also warned against the accusation of deicide, the claim that the Jews collectively and in all generations were responsible for the killing of Jesus, whom the Christian tradition has viewed as the Messiah and the Son of God. The resolution was revolutionary, opening a new phase in Jewish-Christianity relationship and serving as a stepping-stone for further dialogue.[132]

The Catholic resolution brought change in Protestant and Orthodox Churches and they followed the Vatican II in relation to Jews. Thus Christian thinkers concluded that Nazi hatred of the Jews had been fed by ages of Christianity's adverse and hostile attitude towards Jews. In the inter-faith dialogue Catholic and Protestant decided to close their missionary enterprise among Jews; but only conservative protestant Christians continued

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[131] Reuven Firestone, "Jewish-Muslim Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-religious Dialogue*, (ed.), Catherine Cornille, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), p. 229.

[132] Ariel Yaakov "Jewish-Christian Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-religious Dialogue*, (ed.) Cornille Catherine, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), p. 212.

the evangelization. "However, a growing number of Protestant and Catholic thinkers came to characterize Judaism as a religious community in covenant with God."[133]

Amazing changes are taking place. In Germany, the Catholic and Protestant theologians' co-ordinated groups for inter-faith dialogue with Jews, Catholics and Protestants joining synagogue choirs and joining in each other's feasts and cultural activities and Jewish commemorative publications. Along with the Catholic Church many diverse Christian denominations came together to meet with Jews and discuss issues of mutual concern in inter-faith community work. Thus different communities welcome each other to visit their sanctuaries and participate in the services and express wishes of shalom peace. As a rule Synagogues were not open to the non-Jewish, but through the inter-religious dialogue Synagogues and Jewish houses of worship allowed for non-Jewish visitors, thousands of Christians and liberal and conservative Jews came together to celebrate Passover Seders in the Churches.[134] By this time most of the liberal sectors of the Western religious world had become concerned in forms of inter-religious engagement, primarily Jewish-Christian dialogue which was actuated by two factors: the large demographic development of the American Jewish community with its productive integration into almost all sectors of American society and culture on the one hand, and remorse as well as shame within many Christians after the Holocaust on the other. In the Christian attempt to eradicate total prejudices against the Jews, the Western liberal Catholics and Protestants went a step farther to clear the feeling of emotion that this and similar changes had created. In 1960s Catholics and Protestants examined textbooks that had been used in their religious schools and removed passages with anti-Jewish overtones.

Evangelical Protestant Christians believed that until Jews and non-Jews accept Jesus as their Saviour and messiah they remain in a state of spiritual and moral deprivation. For them all should be converted to Christianity. However, when the Zionist movement and Jewish immigration to Palestine started, it was depicted to them as the sign of the time and it was proposed that the current era was ending and the apocalyptic event about to begin. They believe in the establishment of the state of Israel, preparation of the building of the kingdom of God on earth; Jews considered evangelical Christians as a threat to pluralistic society. Jews appreciated the conservative Christians' support and a number of their institutions, such as Wheaton College, included Judaic studies in their curriculum;

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[133] Ibid, p. 213
[134] Ibid, Cf., p. 215.

evangelical students working in Kibbutzim. Thus Christian and Jewish dialogue is based on the assumption that they are two distinct faiths and do not lend themselves easily to a common platform.[135]

The Orthodox Rabbi Yehil Eckstein has pointed out the significance of Israel and the Holy Land to both communities as a common basis for co-operation and understanding of the Holy Land fellowship of Christians and Jews. The Holy land fellowship has collected a big amount of money for helping in the immigration of Jews in Israel and a social program in the country. In the 1967 war, the discussion in Lebanon was founded on the alternative forms of dialogue where Christians, Muslims and Jewish critics of Israel came together to promote peace negotiations and safe guard civil rights in Israel and its occupied territories. Jewish-Christian dialogue developed from 1990-2000 and brought large development within the Jewish community, they appreciated Asian religious traditions and began exchanging ideas with Hindu gurus, Buddhist monks and Muslim mystics, They learned the calibres from other faiths and presented Judaism to them in a new way. He says: "Judaism could enrich itself by learning from other traditions and so make itself more viable as an option to Jewish spiritual seekers."[136]

b) Christianity and Islam:

At present, the relation between Islam and Christianity is under strain though efforts are taking place to improve the same. But the past wounds are not yet healed. Having a constructive dialogue between these two religions would contribute a great deal to the universe because of the absolute numbers, the people engaged and the human and natural sources at stake; at the same time, for theological and historical reasons this would be the most challenging of dialogues, and their failure would mean a threat to the World, their reaction will be conflicts, war and destruction. Whereas fruitful dialogue, conducted in the right spirit, could be a mediator to renovate better relations between them.

The Quran is related to the Biblical traditions although it doesn't present the idea of submission but it presents something new added to the religious beliefs taught by the entire race of Biblical prophets. In some respects Islam presents the same quandary to the Christian as the Christians do to the Jews. Factually it grows out of the same intercellular substance but proposes a substitute reading of the same impressions and the same account

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[135] Ibid, Cf., p. 217.
[136] Ibid, p. 219

of God's engagement with humanity, a reading which, according to each, is more valid and authoritative. In fact it is nothing so much as a reform of God's thoughts, they may say of the interconnected Jewish and Christian traditions.[137]

The Catholic Church came out with the document to the non-Christian religions in the II Vatican Council *Nostra Aetate*: the council affirmed the faith and piety of Muslims and encouraged Christians and Muslims to overcome the conflict of the centuries and work together for the up-liftment of the world and for the betterment of humanity. The council also affirmed esteem for the Muslims, urging all:

> To forget the past and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.[138]

A large number of Muslims have gleaned in the promised Paraclete of John 14: 16 a reference to Muhammad, whereas Christian scholars interpreting the New Testament state that nothing of Muhammad or Islam is in the New Testament, and a large number of Christian scholars say that the New Testament gives the warning against *false prophets*. Quran's position towards Christianity is at the best ambiguous, both those in support of dialogue and those who are against it, find large scriptural support. In the Quran there is self-assurance to the Jews, Sabaeans and Christians:

> Those who believe (in the Quran), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the *Sabians* and the Christians, and who believe in Allah, and the last day, and work righteousness on them shall be no fear, Nor shall they grieve.[139]

Muslims have asserted that they would find Christians closest in affection whereas Jews and Pagans are firmest in enmity, since among Christians there is love, among them are priests and monks who are not arrogant, Christians are committed to learning, the priests and monks renounced the universe, their nature is not arrogant but cherishes others, and they are devoted. They perceive the divine revelation received by the Messenger, their eyes overflow with tears, since they accept the truth, they pray to Our Lord.[140]

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[137] Daniel Madigan, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-religious Dialogue*, (ed.). Catherine Cornille, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), p 244.

[138] Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar & Post Conciliar Documents,* (Bombay, St. Paul Training School, 1992), p. 654.

[139] Ali Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Qur'an, 5: 69*, New Revised Edition, (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1989), pp. 270-271.

[140] Ibid, *The Holy Qur'an, 5: 82-83*, p. 274.

Quran repeated this preference 23 times, addressing Jesus as the Son of Mary, but it denies the Christian assertion of the *Son of God*. Thus we see that Christian commentators affirmed that the Quran does not denounce the current Christian faith but there is misunderstanding or heretical representations that is difficult to confirm. Whereas the Quran condemns the Trinity and the Incarnation (Quran 4:171, 5: 17, 72-73, 116-117) and many Muslim intellectuals further improved the Quran's critique with a not unsophisticated knowledge of the place of Christian doctrinal positions on these issues.[141] At the same time, in the Quran differences of religious belief are represented and show divine pluralism which do not give rise to conflict but exceed each other in honourable works. If God wills, He would have built one nation, whereas you to be tested in what He has given you so seek to exceed each other in honourable acts. You are intended to appear to God; then He will communicate with you the things which you used to differ. (Q 5 48, Q 10: 99) In this circumstance the Prophet is to argue with the people of the sacred scripture only in the best way he is told to say to Jews and Christians; "We believe in what has been revealed to us and revealed to you and our God and your God is one and to Him do we submit."[142]

The Quran's issue is primarily theological, rejecting Christian belief in Trinitarian God, that is the Divinity of Christ and the significance of his crucifixion and Resurrection and responding to the mission of Muhammad as God's prophet. The Christians' engagement with Islamic thought that comes from John of Damascus' writing *De Haeresibus*[143] includes a final Chapter on *The Heresy of the Ishmaelite*, which shows evidence of direct engagement with the Quran, Muslims and their religious beliefs. Although much of John's take on Islam is quite controversial, he pays close attention to it. His knowledge and willingness to distinguish those aspects of Islam with which he is in agreement from what is clearly unacceptable to him, makes him one of the most serious originators of the Muslim Christian dialogue.

The Iconoclast controversy that acted around John in the first half of the eighth century dramatically establishes how Islam and Christianity were working with each other in the early centuries of their co-existence in the broader Middle East even as they do within the pages of the Quran. John lists the heresies of Islam which affected Christianity, one being

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[141] Daniel Madigan, Op. cit, p. 247.
[142] Quoted in Daniel Madigan, Op. Cit. p. 246
[143] Ibid, p. 247

the Quranic approach which sees Christianity as a heresy. In the Quranic realizing, there is only one religion, submission, preached from the beginning by all the prophets. From the beginning it is not at all clear the extent to which Christians or Muslims perceived the other's faith as we might call a separate religion. Rather, the repeated issues of Muslim Christian engagement, whether talked about, ironical over into polemic, should probably be seen as the outworking of this mutual definition of heresy. Both Christians and Muslims sprang up with theological work in this strain, many of them in the form of dialogues, question and answer manuals. These works reflect to some extent actual encounters, and one has to remember that the final author always controls, and thus has, the better argument. These works served both communities in the formation of an identity in relation with others and an education in theology, especially for the Christians.[144]

Under Islamic rule, Arabic texts were produced by Christians, who are engaged in a genuine attempt to express and defend their faith within a new linguistic and religious environment while, on the other hand, material from Latin and Greek communicating people was much more controversial and critical. These apologetics and controversies, were no doubt made more unpleasant by political conflict, and were less engaging than for the Church which lived in the presence of the mosque. Apart from these medieval dialogues and debates, there was little progress made in the centuries. Even today the dialogues no less than the controversies, follow the same that is broached in the Apology of the Christian *Al-Kindi*, written probably early in the ninth century.

Beginning with *Nostra Aetate* in the 1965 Second Vatican Council Declaration on the relationship of the Catholic Church to non-Christian religions, the Council abstained from any mention of Muhammad and the Quran, but it affirmed the religious belief and devoutness of Muslims, to recommend that Christians and Muslims overcome the struggles and conflict of the centuries and work together for humanity, the Council reiterated that:

> The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Moslems. These profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day.[145]

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[144] Ibid, p. 247
[145] Austin Flannery (ed.), *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents,* (Mumbai: Dominic V., 1975), p. 335.

Dialogue and Co-operation have interpreted responses and commitment from individual Muslims such as the D. B. MacDonald Centre in Hartford, the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham, the Henry Martin Institute in Hyderabad, measures to encourage dialogue rather than conversion. Within the Arab Christians the preparation and carrying of the new movement to engagement with Muslims was the Dominican friar George Anawati (1905-1994), well known scholar of Islamic philosophy and theology, he committed his life to building bridges with Muslims aside from culture. In 1944 the Vatican asked the Dominicans to build a centre in Cairo for the study of Islam, without any purpose of proselytise, Institute Dominican d' Etudes Orientals (IDEO) came up. Anawati and his team of scholars were the first members appointed by Vatican.

Another Arab Christian literary and theological inheritance is that of the Egyptian Jesuit Samir Khalil Samir at the University Saint Joseph, Beirut. Muslim scholars are also actively involved in the renewed dialogue, such as Ataullah Siddiqui and Zaki Badawi in the USA. Under the long pontificate of John Paul II (1978-2005), Muslim Christian dialogue flourished because the pope had an ability to use communication and personal contact to concrete relationships without going to discussions of doctrine. Since Benedict XVI, there were few missteps that have turned relations and brought a disappointment. Scholarly dialogue is growing; networks of respect and affection are seen in the Building Bridges Seminars convened annually by the Archbishop of Canterbury beginning in 2002. Scholarly and institutional dialogues have been substantial in the improvement of effective components among Christians and Muslims in present time. It is less formal, smaller groups' encounters in many nations which create friendships that could sustain human relationship at the official level in the crisis.

The Muslim scholars were also active in the renewed dialogue: Seyyed Hassein Nasr, Mahmoud Ayoub and Ismail Raji al-Faruqi in US, Ataullah Siddiqui and Zaki Badawi in UK, Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan and Mustafa Cerci in Bosnia, Turkish reformer Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, whose movements are very active in multi-faith education. These institutions have got hundreds of schools and colleges throughout the world and are active in inter-religious dialogue in many places of the world. The Second Vatican Council has asked the local Churches to take dialogue seriously and to handle formal international dialogues with Al-Azhar University, the Muslim world League and world Islamic Call Society. The Pontifical Council for Inter-religious dialogue (PCID) is devoted to the non-

Christians. There are most important Catholic personalities namely Michael Fitzgerald, M. Afr., Thomas Michel s. j. The Missionaries of Africa are the control figures in the dialogue with Muslims and are responsible for the 'Pontifical Institute for the study of Arabic and Islamic culture' in Rome and the 'Institute des Belles Letters Arabs' in Tunis

The Theological dialogue between Muslims and Christians is bogged down and time has been spent in recapping the same questions without any success and making no progress in the area. Christians may ask how to engage in dialogue with a person who believes the Quran is God's word while a Muslim may also respond by asking is it possible to engage seriously with one who believes that Jesus Christ is God's word. The engagements at the heart of our faith are the obstructions to dialogue. We fail to realize that both are the creation of the same Almighty God, both admit that God had communicated to his chosen prophets in history. Christians claim that the word is most articulately and deliberately spoken in Jesus. Most of those who knew Jesus saw him like a first century Jewish carpenter become rabbi, to others He may be eternal word of God expressed in the flesh. Whereas Muslims believe that the word of God has been expressed certainly in the Quran.

For Christians, Muslims have too high an estimate of the Quran's scripture as God's actual word, whereas Muslims believe Christians have extended the significance of Jesus in raising him from prophet to the divine Son. There is no acceptable way out of mutual miscommunication. We have each been trying to persuade the other of the truth of our situation, although the language used almost declares we will never do so.

The substantial thing we have in common is that Christianity and Islam both believe the divine word that is directed to them in the concreteness of chronological record. The word which both claims is an eternal concept of God is the usual term that can base their reciprocal theological understanding. Both go through the word as being given from above, at the same time having a quality what already has been expressed by God in creation and in the divine action in chronicle. Both Christians and Muslims believe in what we do in our profession of faith is elevating; without any elevating a simple human word to a divine status, both realize that the word has been sent down to human beings: witness the many uses of Quran's verb *nazzala* send down and in John's Gospel the uses of *pempo* '*send*' and *katabaino* 'comedown.'[146]

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[146] Daniel Madigan, Op. cit, p. 253.

Reciprocity is a significant basic in Muslim and Christian dialogue, although there is a controversy between reciprocity as a condition for dialogue and reciprocity as a hoped for result of dialogue. The distinction needs care to be modified, even between theologians willing to lose one's life rather than take another's, a decision to respond to hatred with love and to curses with blessing in the belief.[147] Muslims in dialogue take seriously the Quran's authority to the Prophet to dialogue only *in the best of ways*, in the Islamic tradition the kind of humble, turn the other cheek un-selfishness taught by Jesus has been criticised as no dependable guide to act in the actual world. It should be acknowledged that Christian history has shown deviation from Jesus' teaching.

Reciprocity in relation to rights and freedoms is cause for dialogue or the civil rights of minorities. There are many calls in Europe to restrict the rights of Muslim citizens and Immigrants until full and equal rights are accorded to Christians in Muslim majority countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, where there is violation of the rights and liberties of non-Muslim. Some perceivers wanted to see in the Vatican's references to reciprocity a concern and a demand for reciprocal rights as a condition of further dialogue. This strategy is used neither with the gospel nor with Catholic teaching about the foundation of religious freedom. The Second Vatican Council's declaration on religious freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965) would need sufficient rights and freedoms for Muslims in the West or of Muslim majority countries. If the affairs of the oppressed were genuine then Christian majority countries might react with oppressor countries to sell arms to Saudi Arabia or to buy oil from them until they reform the laws to recognize the human rights of non-Muslims. There is also a possibility that a reciprocal identification of the authenticity of each one's religious belief is a necessary starting point for dialogue. Yet, if such a mutual identity is ever to come, it would be the result of dialogue, or a demand for a Christian acknowledgment of the prophet-hood of Muhammad as the just interaction of Muslim recognition of Jesus. Muslims affirm about Jesus only what the Quran holds about him, not what Christians believe, as Christians accept about Muhammad only what the New Testament tells about him. Dialogue begins in earnest not from an early acceptance of each other's religious beliefs, but from a substantial recognition of each person's equal dignity.

Professional religious educators and leaders in the West, those who have had Islamic training, complain that their search is un-productive for a true equivalent among the

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[147] Ibid, p. 257

minority, migrant Muslim groups. Christians are many times disgusted that local Muslim groups are not always ready for an open dialogue of the model that is commonplace in Western tradition; in that place Muslims do not yet feel themselves at home. These problems may not be settled rapidly, with the passing of time and the further desegregation of Muslims into what were once, for the most part, Christian traditions and cultures, the difficulties caused by those social asymmetries are gradually diminishing. Yet geopolitical asymmetries are becoming more asserted as the Islamic Western condition deepens, this takes a toll not only on Muslim minorities in the West, but also on Christian minorities in specifically Muslim countries. The minority commutative group is proxy for the enemies and bears the force of the global conflict.[148]

Inter-religious dialogue could be imploded in two ways: i) it can suggest that the dialogue could take place between religions but among the laity, ii) each side could be given an idea about the nature of belief and the common features of the religions. If social and political factors are impacting the encounter then those elements may be the focus of dialogue. It is real political and cultural forms to which each faith gives rise and shared cultural and political space within which faithful of various cultures and traditions function. In most cases, cultural and political dialogue is more urgent and more pleasing than theological dialogue. It does not end as a replacement for it since our theologies and understandings of God very much disturb our politics and the cultures that we form.

c) Judaism and Islam:

The purpose of dialogue and conversation is exchange of thoughts and it has been taking place between Jews and Muslims from the seventh century. The Jews questioned those who were involved in the new approach and were divided among themselves, whether to join or not the inter-religious dialogical movement. Thus the Jews and new denominations, demonstrated as early as the Quran, some of the points of variation and controversy between Jews and Muslims.[149] (Q 2:91, 135, 145; 3:64-67, 69-7 2, 78:4:150, etc. Rubin 1999).

During primitive Islamic rule, Jews and Muslims appreciated each other's way of life. The dialogue, social and economic intercommunication, involved discussion on personal and

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[148] Ibid, p. 258
[149] Reuven Firestone, "Jewish-Muslim Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-religious Dialogue*" (ed.) Catherine Cornille, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), p. 224.

religious issues. In the middle ages, from the 9th to the 16th centuries, called the classical period of Islam, there was a debating institution called Majlis, which used to conduct discussions and dialogue, while intellectuals, scientists and artists were sponsored and patronized by government officials and the wealthy merchants who used to support the arts and science, and the caliph would typically support poets, scientists, legal scholars; as a result the religious scholars and intellectuals had the opportunity to learn across religious boundaries and to arrive at a better understanding of the ideals and practices of their neighbours. It was not organized like today's inter-religious dialogue and the purpose was not to understand religions in a pluralistic society, but to demonstrate the truth with the available evidence; however, often the debate turned into a verbal fight.

The contention in the early traditions of new denominations could be found extravagantly in Judaism, Christianity and Islam; the new religious denominations are regularly accused by instituted religions, which quarrel against them in order to avoid the appearance of religious competition. The new religions necessarily respond in kind, whereas in the notion of scriptural religions that controversy appears in scripture. When the new religions become institutional, however, they react in the same manner toward the new developing religions which are received as religious challenges. Thus it is within the Semitic religions, each looking forward and the reverse at competing religions, and each demonstrating controversies to question and rejecting the fundamental principles and the religious challengers. It is also substantial to acknowledge this because it affirms an intellectual and religious belief around which nearly all succeeding discussion, theological controversies and productive dialogue were constructed. From the beginning of Islamic emergence to the present, Jews and Muslims have lived and communicated with each other. This was the broadest sense of dialogue during those times and socio economical inter-communication has included discussion about personal issues such as religion. In the beginning of Muslim domination several genres of Arabic literature accidentally acknowledged occasions of the former.

The religious formation was stable only two-three periods of time, Muslim rule took place which established officially the Muslim law of the *dhimma* which means protective custody. Jews and Christians as *dhimmi* communities were protected but reduced to submission and protected by law, but at an unessential status. Under the *dhimma* they were free to worship without prevention as long as worship did not occur in public space, but

they were prohibited to proselytize. As far as Jews and Christians accepted Islamic status they were protected.

The official protection could be removed if they demonstrated adverse conditions. The balance between protection and inferior status was achieved by acquiring certain manners in relation to Muslims, using specified forms of address and wearing specific clothing and if *dhimmis* did not accept them then they could be subject to violence. Sometimes they were accused of personal gain or other purchasable reasons that require a collective response or promotion by the *dhimmi* community for its own security. In amount, the *dhimma* allowed some status for Jews in the Muslim world; the legal protection came at a cost that based a clear hierarchy of status that controlled free and open discourse on religious issues to some special situations.

During the Islamic classical period, that is the political, cultural and scholarly ascendant from ninth to the sixteenth centuries, conversations took place at different levels, among educated Muslims, Jews and Christians. Similarly dialogue took place between conservatives, sceptics, rationalists and sectarians and also within the religious community. These kinds of dialogue ranged officially from arguments to communications in courts of caliphs, sultans and other highly ranking officials through conversation with the members of different religious communities living in the mixed neighbourhood of towns and villages in the Muslim territories; but in Spain the nature of relationships was difficult and so complex that it is difficult to assess its quality.[150] A condition of semantic field which includes movements of intellectuals, scientists and artists sponsored by patrons who were typically high government officials and wealthy merchants wishing to support the arts and sciences are discussed and debated. The style of discourse was often rivalry: caliph generally put poets, scientists, legal scholars and story-tellers to defeat their competitors and rejoice in the defeat. The addresses to religious discussions are found in different Muslim and Jewish sources.

These kinds of debates usually took place over theological and legal differences between contending Muslims and Jews, Muslims and Christians. The structure of the meeting was not like the inter-religious dialogues that we have today and the intention of dialogue was not for a better understanding of the religions in a pluralistic situation, but the contestant deliberately sought to demonstrate his own position of truth, with the belief that it might

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[150] Ibid, p. 225.

bring divine reward. The *majlis*[151] did not operate as a study group, but as a debating society, very often, the debate turned into a verbal well planned fight, the associates and competitors within these *majlis* protected and allowed to speak freely. As a result, religious scholars and intellectuals had the chance to learn religious limits and to arrive at a better appreciation of the ideas and activities of their religious neighbourhood. Social willingness and generosity toward minorities is much more frequent when politics are stable and the economic system is strong. There was a decreasing of the Muslim world from the later middle Ages into the early modern periods, corresponding with a universal unwillingness for inter-religious discourse regarding the position of religious and other minorities. The West was going through development in economic systems, populations and influence. This increased Western confidence and domination in the domestic affairs of Muslim dominated countries as the result of the wresting of political control from local powers.

During the Islamic domination in the Middle East, the minority communities i.e., Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians were suppressed. However, during the western colonial power, due to their faithfulness and reliability, they were given privileges in the administrative class. This provoked hostility among Muslims. Thereafter the colonial power fell, and once again the Jews were targeted, thus modern Israel was considered as a separate nation. The significant impact on Muslim Jewish dialogue today, is the establishment of Israel, a Jewish state, in one of the most private areas of the Muslim world, which has invoked tension between Jews and Muslims. The conflict has been increasing over the decades and thus Jewish-Muslim dialogue all over the world has been affected.

Jews were considered dangerous in many places, and the birth of modern Israel was regarded as a final tyrannical occupant outpost, ruled by Jews and approved by Western Christendom and world Jewish society. The history of Muslim refusal and the changing status of Jews in relation to Islamic social and legal beliefs have had an essential impact on Jewish and Muslim relations chronologically and have had a substantial influence on the state of Jewish and Muslim dialogue today.[152] Different representations of Jews under Muslim governmental systems throughout the centuries have caused two positions: One side claims that the Muslim world was extremely tolerant, and the Jews were outstandingly free from persecution, another side claims that the *dhimmitude* school indicates that Muslims have never been liberal toward religious minorities, the Jews' hatred of Muslims

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[151] Ibid, p. 226
[152] Ibid, p. 227

as well as Christians is so deeply rooted in Islamic theological system and the law, that it may be difficult to overcome such hostility.

The religious minorities under Islamic law witnessed prejudice, violence and massacres due to the religious recognitions. Medieval political systems did not assure life, Liberty or the movement of happiness as it is expected from instructed democratic political communication of another religious, ethnic, linguistic and denominational minority. The formation of the modern nation of Israel, a Jewish nation, one of the oldest and most sacred places for the Jews, Christians as well as Muslims, has created tensions amongst Jews and Muslims in the region. The speech over the controversy and fighting has increased over the past decades. While the history and causes of this increasing religiosity remain challenged, there was no question occurring and the religious identification with national struggle has negatively affected Jewish and Muslim dialogue all over.

Jewish and Muslim awakening and community development and civic participation dialogue does take place in three substantial places today: i) Europe, ii) Israel/Palestine and iii) North America. The significant controversies in national chronology, immigration practices, and demographic particularities within the different areas make it un-acceptable to offer a sufficient analysis of Jewish Muslim dialogue in the above mentioned three places. In the past century inter-religious dialogue was initiated as a means of mitigating historic and theological stress within religions in order to find common ground for community development and civic engagement, this aim continues comparatively new in Jewish Muslim dialogue. There are three historical movements that have bothered all religious communities, and have also had a substantial response on Jewish Muslim dialogue and fourth has had a great consequence on on-going development of such dialogue: i) The establishing of the new state of Israel in 1948, and its resultant wars and conflicts, ii) The Second Vatican Council, iii) The development in the presence of Muslims as democracy in Europe and the Americas since 1960, and iv) the Radical mass violence in the name of Islam attacking with the bombing and destruction of the New York World Trade Centre, and bombing in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005. The modern occasions of dialogue between Jews and Muslims as a means of developing community relation and civic promise began at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 at Chicago.

Muslims came into the dialogue only after the Second Vatican Council, in 1965 the Council published the document namely, *Declaration of the Relation of the Church with*

Non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate. For the first time in the history of the Catholic Church, it publically declared non-Christian religions to be worthy of respect and dialogue.[153] The Civil Rights movement and the creation of Israel as a new nation had brought the Jewish Muslim controversy into universal emphasis decades earlier, but the external Jewish Muslim struggle became a central point for dialogue in 1970 in the United States. This sacred Vatican council recommends forgetting the past and working faithfully to reciprocally preserve and promote togetherness for the benefit of all humanity, Justice and moral-benefit and peace and harmony.

At the time the Muslim population was still quite small, significantly less visible and not well organized thus, although they were invited for inter-religious events and programs, they were hardly part of the ordinary inter-religious equation because of their low demographic profile in Europe and the United States until 1960. American Muslim employment in dialogue increased later. *Nostra Aetate* was not only the beginning of Catholic dialogue with non-Christian religious communities, but served to bring about an increased Catholic and Protestant engagement as well.

After Muslim immigration and after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 they expended substantial efforts to organize community centres, mosques and local and national organizations, not only to support its own growth but also to project a larger profile in American affairs generally. This brought Muslims into the public field of inter-religious discourse and dialogue.

After the immigration and Nationality act of 1965, the immigrants were accepted for higher education and became middle-class people living among the American communities. Thus they began to organize community centres at local and national level; the Muslim students began organizing groups in some U.S. campuses. The active Muslim students Association (MSA), went on to found other organization e.g., in 1982 Islamic society of North America, which brought all Muslim institutions into one network. Later on, many other organizations and associations came up, the purpose was to project a larger profile in American affairs generally, and Muslim professionals became more involved in civic and social affairs. They were invited by other communities to take part in inter-religious dialogue and a vacation was created to bring them together so that they could meet each other and observe each other's behaviour in informal settings. For this Muslim

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[153] Ibid, p. 229

clergy and Jewish religious leaders were invited. In the initial stages Muslim religious leadership were not as direct as Christian and Jewish religious leaders, because Islamic centres do not have trained clergy or are often strangled with English. In 1980 the bilateral contact between Jewish and Muslim leaders and laity increased, in the wake of the Camp David Accords that were signed in 1979, which was a hopeful development in Israeli Palestinian relations.

It also brought Jews and Muslims in dialogical environments in which they could meet one another and observe each other's behaviours in inter-religious settings. Clergy councils in some areas invited Muslim religious leaders to join or attend events. Where synagogues and mosques or Islamic centres happened to be in the same neighbourhood, rabbis sometimes initiated contact with Muslim religious leaders. The Muslim religious leadership was not as straight because of the unique situation i.e., deficiency of trained clergy and strife with English language. [154]

The bilateral contact among Jewish and Muslim leaders and laity rose during 1980, particularly in the wake of the Camp David Accords that was hopeful of improvement in Israeli Palestinian relations. This arena usually encouraged positive developments in Jewish Muslim relations in Europe and in the United States, whereas a negative and inhibited dialogue is seen during this decade at the grassroots level. In 1981-1984 the University of Denver held four successive annual meetings and got eminent scholars of Judaism and Islam to hear and discuss the research of each under the centre for Judaic Studies at Denver. The discussion afterward published two volumes of scholarly papers that focused on Jewish Muslim relations. The colleges and universities later on held various colloquia and conferences on Judaism, Jewish and Muslim relations, and a core group of scholars from both sides began to meet with each other informally to co-operate with common interest in history, linguistics, philosophy and religion.

At the congregational level both the Jewish and Muslim communities were divided, whether or not dialogue should be promoted. In the Jewish community, the liberal was the most active whereas the Muslim community was divided over dialogue in general and dialogue with Jews specially. Grassroots programs are organized voluntarily by individual Jews and Muslims outside the framework of any religious congregation. These tend to be less formal and are usually short-lived. It was difficult to prove and analyse, however a

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[154] Ibid, p. 231

small survey of Jewish Muslim beginnings was arranged by the centre for Jewish Muslim conflict. In 2009, it was sent to 44 independent organizations and groups in the USA, ranging from university dialogue groups to meetings organized over the Israel/Palestine conflict.

The American Jewish Committee was established in 1980, but it did not succeed in working relations with Muslim organizations, but in 2007 the Islamic Society of North America invited Rabbi Eric Yoffie, the president of the Union for Reform Judaism, to address its 44th yearly conference. The two groups subsequently instituted a series of programs from synagogues with mosques for dialogue at various levels, to improving curricula for religious schools and houses of worship.[155]The New York-based Foundation for Ethnic Understanding (FFEU), has organized an annual international operation to join Jewish Muslim congregations in a *weekend of twinning* to promote on-going interaction among Muslim and Jewish communities throughout North America and parts of Europe. The substantial program at present is an association in the United States that is called *New Ground: A Muslim Jewish Partnership for Change.* Founded by Jewish and Muslim donors jointly, the main hurdle affecting dialogue between Muslims and Jews is their relative merging into American culture.

Jews love the United States and have integrated themselves deeply into American life and created religious and civic support for their community while providing economic, social political support to the Jews locally and abroad. Jews began the immigration and integration process two-three generations prior to most Muslims, which put them in a different social position in America. American Muslims have many sub-groups that are classified according to nation, language, religious trend. The immigrants and descendants came from Arabic-speaking countries, from India and Pakistan. Others are of African American descent, who has been part of America since the 17th century. This particular group does not want to reach out to non-Muslims. Still others are Arabic world Muslims from Iran, Indonesia, and Malaysia who are largely immigrant in the first generation and still integrating into American culture.

Good relations with non-Jews have been an institutional goal of Jewish faithful and Jewish administrations for centuries; and religious communities at all levels are considered an important aspect of Jewish common responsibility. Whereas Muslims in America were less

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[155] Ibid, Cf., p. 231.

interested in inter-religious dialogue and they had no experience of the benefits of the inter-religious dialogue.[156] The majority of those who were associated with the Nation of Islam have left that group to become supposed Muslims, they are more interested in improving their own communities; they don't feel great need to reach out to non-Muslims through dialogue. Thus the Muslim communities in such a condition incline to be devoted to internal community improvement, support and tend to escape from interfaith relations. Whereas American Jews, have all but renounced the ethnically differentiated synagogues of former generations to form more American Jewish communities, since they have integrated profoundly into American life, Jews had already made religious, civic and supported bodies in the beginning and improved a complex and integrated organizational presence to provide economic, social and political tolerance to Jews locally and generally.

The numbers of Jews and Muslims in America are almost equivalent; the rough figure of five to six million for both communities seems the estimate. Their level of education is also equal; both are from the middle and professional classes. Jews are more supported in the American system; they hold offices in local, state and national governments and are represented in the communications and the arts; whereas Muslims remain victims of prejudice in American society and have not received the success in the social and political system which Jews enjoy. This is expressed and presents a barrier to on-going dialogues. Jews have a much more developed institutional infrastructure since they are usually comfortable in American social situations, have inclined to reach out more to Muslims and invite them to their own area.[157]

American Muslims are part of a global community which is three hundred times the size of the global Jewish community. Muslims make up 20-25% of the world population; Jews make up about two tenths of 1%. Muslims sometime wonder that Jews are a tiny and weak minority but have a magnificent influence and power in America, also it is observed that in the Israeli discourse by the Arab Israeli Professor Sami Ma'ri reported in 1970, says:

> In Israel, there is an Arab minority with a mentality of a majority, living within a Jewish majority with a mentality of a minority.[158]

From 1981-1984 Denver University held four annual committee meetings and brought Jews and Islamic scholars together to discuss the research under the patronage of the centre

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[156] Ibid, p. 233
[157] Ibid, pp. 234-235.
[158] Ibid, p. 235

for Judaic studies at the University level. The outcome was published in two volumes. Other colleges and Universities also made their scholars collaborate on issues of common interest in history, linguistics, philosophy, religion. The Iowa University also began an association to review a scholarly journal dedicated to the discussion on Islamic and Jewish traditions, cultures and practices. Jewish communities of America were also involved in various ways with the local Muslim communities. Whereas the Muslims of the Arabian countries were more affected by the Israel-Palestine conflict, thus they were not interested in reaching out to Jews. The educationists of both the communities began to visit each other's schools, clergymen and teachers to religious schools and the youth programs, to suppress conflicts and prejudice and to establish peace and harmony in the society. The centre for Muslim- Jewish engagement surveyed 44 independent organizations/groups in the United States in 2009. These ranged from university dialogue groups to meetings organized over the Israel Palestine conflict. Thus the survey report says that there is increasing interest in dialogue.[159]

As Jews have received Western values and culture in the last two centuries, they have incorporated Islam phobia into the natural Jewish dislike toward Islam as a contending and threatening religious civilization. Their militancy has had a negative effect on the Jewish community's Muslim Jewish dialogue.

Positive events took place with the President's visits to Jerusalem and communication of the Camp David Accords, the development of the Israel/Palestine situation has more often hindered positive Jewish Muslim dialogue than helped it, however the conflict also sometimes invites positive dialogue in the Middle East. For example, the contemporary conflict has induced investment in many plans and projects in Israel, the West Bank and Palestine that bring Muslims and Jews together in dialogical environments there and in foreign countries. The consequences of September 11, 2001 war on terror caused Jews and Muslims to reach out and secure each other, to open their doors and interact with the larger American population and especially with Jews. After September 11, 2001, many synagogues and churches reached to the local Muslim organisation, for positive instructive programs on Islam and took adults and children to local Islamic institutions in an effort to better understand their neighbours and the dangers of Islam phobia.

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[159] Ibid, 232

In the United States and Europe, Jews and Muslims share a common status that is devastating in incalculable ways. Jews and Muslims were commonly considered allies of one another in present times. Muslims and Jews have common advocacy issues to which the Western tradition is not naturally accretive e.g., need for religious circumcision, religious animal slaughter (kosher/hallal), and personal condition for marriage and inheritance, advocacy to establish and enforce hate-crimes, legislation and support for faith-based education.[160] This kind of coalition needs bilateral dialogue which is distinguished from the larger dialogue of religious views. Bilateral dialogue demonstrates a specific relationship between allies to a third or more communities with which the two allied communities have confrontation on particular issues. These shared material and existential benefits have proved the highlight of common religious and cultural heritage. Jews who engage with Muslims in dialogue also incline to believe that the effort will bring agreement about the ambitions of Jews for a homeland in Israel.

The outcomes of dialogue will include better trust with a substantial Jewish minority and strategies for institution building. Current observation of Jewish Muslim dialogues are weak and yet to be developed, particularly when compared to Christian ecumenical dialogue and Jewish Christian dialogue which has generated documents *(Nostra Aetate, Dabru Emet)* and increasingly too, Christian Muslim dialogue has generated formal platforms for dialogue *(Nostra Aetate,* "A Common Word"*)*[161]

d) Hinduism and Christianity:

There are traditions that link the apostle St. Thomas with India and evidence of a Christian existence in South India from the seventh or eighth centuries CE. However, we don't have evidence of Hindu Christian interaction prior to the colonial era during the period in which European merchants from Portugal and Britain came to India. The British East India Company initially did not allow the missionaries to proselytize in India since their work may stir hostility among Hindus and prevent the business possibilities, but later on in 1813 they revised and removed the obstacles to the missionary work in their territories. The Christian tradition in India was different and theology, liturgy and culture were separated by the beginnings of nationalism. The earliest seems to be a Christian community traced by some Christian traditions in India to the coming of St. Thomas the Apostle in the first

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[160] Ibid, p. 237
[161] Ibid, p. 238

century, focused in the South Indian region especially in Kerala and had cordial relations with Hindu neighbourhood.

These groups of communities were not active proselytizers, the Roman Catholic communities were focused in the Portuguese dominions; they were present in small groups. But during the eighteenth century, European missionaries began to work in India, by the nineteenth century the most extensive and most prestigious Christian communities were made up of European and American Protestant denominations. These groups had substantial dialogical approaches with the Hindu communities and their culture; the Hindus were conscious about the Protestant denomination and the British and Portuguese colonial power. The Hindus who were educated in English were aware of the latter forms of Christianity.[162]

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the region of Bengal the Christian tradition made the most substantial result in India. There were many reputable missionaries whose work had responses in the Hindu communities and promoted the improvement of Hindu Christian communication. In the years 1761-1834 William Carey was one of the famous Missionaries. Carey is the pioneer of the Baptist Missionary Society, which functioned first from a Danish territory near Calcutta. He used the help of Hindu scholars to assist him in the work of translation of the Bible into various Indian languages and thus the New Testament in Bengali came in 1801. Carey's techniques for the proclamation of Christ in India included preaching, educating, translating and distribution of Christian literature in the local languages.[163]

To Alexander Duff, education is equipment for training Hindus for Christianity. Duff was a missionary of the Church of Scotland, who believed that Christian education is the highest form of education, which is intellectual and scientific, built on ethical standards and on the religious principles of Christ.[164] Thus Duff caught wealthy and bright Indian students, hoping that Western learning would change the grip of Hinduism and lead to proselytization.

Western education led many Hindu scholars to accept Christian religious belief; Western education also had the effect of turning Hindus back to their own original tradition. These

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[162] Rambachan Anantanand, "Hindu-Christian Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-religious Dialogue*, (ed.) Catherine Cornille, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), p, 325.
[163] Ibid, p. 325
[164] J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India,* (Delhi: Manorharlal, 1914), p. 19.

Hindus were among the primary agents for the rehabilitation and challenge of the Hindu tradition. They engaged in industrious discussions with their Christian contemporaries and are the earliest associates and shapers of Hindu Christian dialogue. The survivors of these pioneers of Hindu and Christian dialogue represent that an encounter with another custom and traditions can change and improve one's appreciation of one's own mother tradition.

One of the most significant Hindus in this regard was Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833) and thus Hindu Christian dialogue in a sense began with him. Farquhar says that it was he who introduced the entire existence of religious, social and instructive promotion in the Hindu community.[165] He was from an orthodox Brahmin Hindu family from Bengal; he studied Islam at Patna and Hinduism in Varanasi. In 1829, Roy founded the *Brahmo Samaj*, to improve and reform Hindu society. Numerically it was a small centre for all liberal religious and social approaches; this centre developed a number of leaders who influenced its doctrine and direction. Roy enjoyed friendship with the missionaries; he accompanied the worship, participated in discussions and took passionate interest in their educational contributions. He was the first Hindu to make the attempt to disconnect Jesus from institutional Christianity. Later in the nineteenth and early in the twentieth century, all the major Hindus adopted his contribution. In 1820 Roy printed *The Precepts of Jesus* based on what he believed to be Jesus' ethical teachings.

Roy considered that the ethical teaching of Jesus supplied resources for the improvement of Hindu society and its teachings could benefit from the doctrines of the Church about Jesus. He excludes the biographical passages and references to the miracles because the historical Jesus doesn't have the same significance for the liberation *moksha* in the Hindu tradition as it has in Christianity. Thus he preserves the thread in Hindu Christian dialogue. Roy's representation of the Christian tradition, as Kopf (1979) so competently demonstrates, was also profoundly convinced by Unitarianism.[166]

Roy was the primary Hindu supporter for dialogue with Christians in India; but his interest in communication was limited. His main interest was in refuting Trinitarian Christianity and in arguing for the dependence of Jesus on God. Doctrines derived from Hinduism did not feature prominently in this dialogue. His Christian missionary ministers were responsible for the careful focus of the dialogue; their interest was to renounce all salvific

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[165] Ibid, p. 29
[166] Rambachan Anantanand, Op. cit, p. 327

assumptions from the Hindu traditions and to assert that only Jesus is the way to salvation. Much of Roy's work was focussed on religious and social reform, although such matters did not appear conspicuously in his dialogue with missionaries. It was Roy who opened the doors for other Hindus to engage in and contribute to this dialogue.

Keshub Sen adopted an extremely eclectic terminology and religious exercise that made it difficult to identify him with any specific tradition. His effort towards Hindu Christian dialogue is his introduction of the idea of the Asiatic Christ. This idea leads to Hindu voices like Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, an eloquent and wide-ranging lecture given on 5th May 1866 in Calcutta. Sen began his lecture with a description of Jesus as the most honest and true benefactor of humankind. He painted a disgraceful picture of human societal corruption. After Keshub Sen, there was no other impression of reform associated with the *Brahmo Samaj,* Sen was not a Christian convert yet he spoke in exalted terms about Jesus. He persuaded Swami Vivekananda, but he saw the non-dual (*Advaita*) custom as the self-satisfaction of Christian dualism and depicted Jesus as a teacher of non-dual truth. In the approach of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, who established the *Arya Samaj* association, a radical change has taken place (1824-1883); he was different from *Brahmo Samaj* leaders. He refuted the claims to truth in Christianity and affirmed the exclusive truth of his exposition of the instructions of the *Vedas*.

Dayananda has more clarity than Roy and Sen about his authorised ground for persevering in dialogue with other religions as well as the prescriptive doctrines. There are four vital substances of his participation in dialogue: i) He asserted Vedas to be the repository of truth reasonable for all times and places. ii) Dayananda asserts that the *Vedas* teach monotheism, numerous names are used in the *Vedas* to refer to numerous expressions of the one God, not multiple gods. iii) Later on like Gandhi, Dayananda emphasised that revelation doesn't contradict morality and reason. iv) *Vedas* included all truth; they also represented the later discoveries of science.[167]

His discussion of all religions asserted that the Vedas contained entire religious and scientific truth. He understood the affirmations of Christianity on the authority of the Bible and formulated his critique of the Christian tradition in his magnum opus, *Satyartha Prakash* Light of Truth. Dayananda could read Christian Scripture in the way missionaries

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[167] J.T. Jordens, *Dayananda Sarasvati: His Life and Ideas*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 171-172.

read Hindu texts: exact, dogmatic, and uncharitable. The understanding Gandhi would later on apply to the New Testament is totally absent. The theological stand of Dayananda was exclusive and he moves in dialogue from a critical perspective grounded on his understanding of the Vedas as the sole historical thus eternal authority in religion.[168]

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), adherent of Sri Ramakrishna and the founder of the Ramakrishna Mission, deals with the source for Hindu Christian dialogue in non-dual religious experience and follows a model that many contemporary classifications will regard as inclusive. Vivekananda's approach to dialogue with Christianity agreed with his approach to inter-religious dialogue. According to Vivekananda, a movement in religion is not a growth but it is from falsehood to truth, from a lower to a higher truth. The world of religions is only a moving, coming up of men and women, through different processes and circumstances to the same purpose.[169] For Vivekananda, this movement or journey is the impressing to the non-dualistic reality. This awaking is in all the religions of the universe, various paths but the end (non-dualism) is the same.

According to Vivekananda there are three levels in the improvement of all religions: i) God is an additional cosmic being, there is little human closeness with God, ii) based on the doctrine of omniscience and emphasis on pantheism, God is everywhere in the heavens in the universe and also in human beings, iii) Through the religious evolution, human being discloses unity and identity with all pervasive, non-dual truth of the universe.[170]

According to Vivekananda, all the religions reflect three stages, since the evolution to a higher stage doesn't imply the abandoning of any phase. He utilized this evolutionary theology to realize Christianity and to dialogue with Christians. He saw there is no difference between Christianity and the teaching of non-dual Hinduism (*Advaita Vedanta*). Unlike Swami Dayananda Saraswati and the *Brahmo Samaj,* who refused the Hindu doctrine of divine movement (*avatara*) into the universe, Vivekananda explained Jesus meaningfully through Hindu assertion of multiple divine manifestations. Christian claims regarding the uniqueness of Jesus that Christ was a manifestation of God, so was the

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[168] Leonard Swidler, "The History of Inter-Religious Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-religious Dialogue*, (ed.) Catherine Cpornille, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), p, 3.

[169] Rambachan, Anantanand, *Swami Vivekananda: A Hindu Model for Inter-religious Dialogue,* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), p. 11.

[170] Swami Vivekananda, The Collected Works, abbreviated CW. Vol. 8th, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 1964-1971), p. 323.

Buddha, and there will be hundreds of other sages. One shouldn't limit God to any place. The claim of divine revelation has occurred only once.

> To the masses who could not conceive of anything higher than a Personal God, he said, "Pray to your father in heaven." To others who could grasp a higher idea, he said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches," but to his disciples to whom he revealed himself more fully, he proclaimed the highest truth, "I and my Father are One."[171]

Swami Vivekananda presented a novel representation of non-dualism (*Advaita*) as the termination of human religious quest and utilized this as a norm with which to measure Christianity. Suggesting not mere tolerance, but universal approval, he makes the statement that all religions are true and that religious development proceeds not from error to truth, *The Imitation of Christ* enchanted Vivekananda; it was the only text during his travels he kept with him, following the death of his teacher Ramakrishna. He interpreted that his intention in translating this text was to present the true spirit of Christianity to his fellow Hindus.

Likewise Vivekananda reflected the Christian doctrine of primary or original sin and analysed with *Advaita* understanding of the implicit purity of the atman, on the whole, he felt that the Christian tradition emphasized much on human depravity and sinfulness. Vivekananda's stress on Jesus' tolerance in the world is a point of rectification to Gandhi, who encouraged Hindu Christian dialogue; he also brought new anxieties to this communication. Gandhi's reference to the Christian tradition, that occurred in the discourse of his leadership of a nationalistic struggle for Indian freedom, for religious and social reform, reflects continuity with earlier participation for Hindus. Gandhi had the most extensive contacts and dialogue with Christians, thus he became friendly with many Christian Missionaries and eloquent leaders.

Gandhi had initially a negative approach towards Christianity, he heard Christian missionaries near the street corner of his high school abusing Hindus and their gods.[172] He also heard that conversion to Christianity needed cultural self-renunciation and Europeanization.

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[171] Quoted in Rambachan Anantanand, "Hindu-Christian Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-religious Dialogue*, p. 332.

[172] M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth,* (Beacon: Beacon publisher, 1993), pp.33-34.

His depth encounter with Christians and Christianity began when he was a law student in England and he read parts of the Bible: the Sermon on Mount (N. T., Mathew 5:1-12) which directly touched his heart. Christian scriptures and the message of Jesus is articulated entirely in the Sermon on the Mount, thus he got involved in dialogue with evangelical Protestants and he attended prayer services, and also encountered the writing of Leo Tolstoy and was attracted to him. By the time he returned to India, dialogues with Christianity were in position; by that time also, Gandhi had vast contacts in India with foreign missionaries who attempted to draw him into dialogue on Jesus, Christianity and transformation.

> When I read in the Sermon on the Mount such passages as "Resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" and "Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father who is in Heaven," I was simply overjoyed, and found my own opinion confirmed where I least expected it. The *Bhagavadgita* deepened the impression, and Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is within you* gave it permanent form.[173]

He found in Jesus' teaching and illustration a practical method for protesting evil through non-violence. Jesus in other words, is one of our finest examples of *satygraha (truth force).* If He did not teach us to regulate the whole of life by the eternal law of Love, then Jesus lived and died in vain.[174] Gandhi's significance for Hindu Christian dialogue is rooted in his version of the non-violent meaning of Jesus that has had the greatest influence on the Christian tradition.

Gandhi did not give Jesus unique incarnation status, he involved Jesus as one of the greatest teachers of mankind, as a personification of sacrificial love, though for him Jesus was not the only son God. Gandhi recapitulated his view on Jesus:

> It was more than I could believe the Jesus was the only incarnate son of God, and that only he who believed in him would have everlasting life. If God could have sons, all of us were his sons. If Jesus was like God or God Himself, then all men were like God and could be God Himself.[175]

According to Gandhi metaphorically 'Son of God' means Jesus' obedience to the will of God (His Father) and to His closeness to perfection. Gandhi wasn't interested in a historic

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[173] Darrell J. Fasching, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach to Global Ethics,* (Sussex in U. K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 157.

[174] M.M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance,* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1970), p. 205.

[175] M.K. Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus Christ,* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1963), pp. 11-12.

Jesus and for him the historical Jesus hasn't lived; it was the Gospel narrator's imagination, his Sermon on the Mount will still be true, hence when Gandhi rejects the historical Jesus, it means he rejected the doctrines of salvation and forgiveness rooted in the crucifixion of Jesus, for Gandhi the birth and death of Jesus are an on-going process of all human being. Thus one can't think of birth without death on the cross, the living Christ, means the living cross. He says that the world still awaits the birth of Jesus Christ, as far as the hunger for peace remains unsatisfied; Jesus Christ is yet to be born. When the real peace is established we don't need proofs, yet it will echo in our life, then only we could say that Jesus Christ is born.[176]

Gandhi repeatedly said that he was not against proselytization, resisted the missionary techniques and their impersonal metaphors of harvest, yet in his writings and places in his arguments, some statements suggest that there is no need for proselytization. Many of these arguments continue to be supported in contemporary Hindu Christian dialogue. His position with regard to proselytization is deeper commitment to his principle of *swadeshi* i.e., one's own community or nation. Gandhi means, be loyal to one's own ancestral religion and work for its reformation is essential.

One can learn from and assimilate the truths of other traditions without abandoning one's own. His position to conversion or proselytization reflects his commitment to the doctrine of the equivalence of all religions i.e., *sarva dharma samanatva* (*Samartha* 1974). His tolerance was prompted by his political concern for religious harmony in India and the potency for violence among the traditions of India. Knowing the errors in one's own traditions leads to humility in dialogue on the whole; Gandhi's doctrine of the equality of religions seems to be chiefly developing a relationship within religions characterised by tolerance, respect, co-operation and learning.

Gandhi was deeply troubled by evangelism or proselytization, for this matter there is continuous tension amongst Hindus and Christians everywhere. Gandhi was in discomfort with Indian converts' acceptance of western culinary and dress habits. Proselytization caused shame to one's own ancestral faith and heritage. For Gandhi proselytization meant totally surrendering the evil of the old and adoption of all the good in the new and a careful avoidance of evil in the new life. Thus proselytization should mean a life of greater commitment to one's nation, and surrender to God; for examples Indian Christians like

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[176] Ibid, pp. 66-67.

Kali Charan Bannerjee and S. K. Rudra, who affirmed the Indian way of life while being serious devoted Christians. [177]

XVI. Aspirations for Dialogue:

a) Abrahamic Dialogue:

Dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims increasingly goes back to Abraham, who holds an important place in each of the traditions: he is like the cornerstone of a system of the Semitic religions, he is the father of all those who believe in the one God. The difficulty with this is what we might call the *Abrahamic Strategy* which has most often been a strategy of argument; this patriarch has been used repeatedly in our traditions. Over the centuries claiming Abraham as father, they have tried to take him away from his other children, only to find that another group comes along later and claims to be the real children of Abraham.

In the New Testament, the appeal to the comprehension of Abraham, Paul to Romans and Galatians, and by the evangelist John in (John 8:31-59), seems to inevitably involve the retaliatory of the Jewish people. There is no reason why Abraham to Romans (4:16) could not equally remain the father of the Jews and those who are not under the Law. To the Galatians Paul explicitly makes the disinheritance of the Jews. And the impressive image he changes his attention to the mothers of Ismail and Isaac or Abraham's two sons. He classifies the Jews as the children of Hagar the concubine or a slave woman, since he understands them as being still subject to the Law. On the other hand, he considers legitimate the children of Sarah, being the free woman. In the Galatians Paul says: "Cast out the slave and her son; for the son of the slave shall not inherit with the son of the free woman."[178] "So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.""[179]

In the Quran also, the same strategy is used, appealing to Abraham to establish the primary covenant of God without accepting Torah, the Bible, or membership in Judaism or in Christianity: "Ye people of the Book! Why dispute ye about Abraham, when the Law and

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[177] Rambachan Anantanand, "Hindu-Christian Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-religious Dialogue*, Catherine Cornille, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), p. 340.

[178] The Holy Bible, RSV, *St., Paul to Galatians 4:30,* (Bangalore, Collins Theological Publication, 1988), p.179

[179] Ibid, *Genesis 2: 10,* p. 16

the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Have ye no understanding?[180] As we have seen in the earlier examples with Christians, there is an implicit claim to be the *true heirs* of Abraham:

> Without a doubt, among men, the nearest of kin to Abraham, are those who followed him, as are also this prophet and those who believe; and Allah is the protector of those who have faith.[181]

If we read this text in a comprehensive way, it could lead to understanding all the believers. Muslim tradition usually desires to understand it alone; it is to say that only the followers of the *sunna* of Muhammad, who perform the *Kaaba* rituals that go back to Abraham, are verily his heirs. We could add to the New Testament and the Quran how in the *Torah* God's promise of the Land belonging to other peoples is attributed back to Abraham.[182] The claim to the land and vindication for the dispossession of its several tribes to originate with the divine engagement to Abraham, we see in Genesis 12 and this is geographically elaborated at the time of the characterization of the covenant in Genesis 15: 18-21. The vindication was requested by both Christians and Jews.

There are components of the patriarch's account that made him an ideal example: Abraham's pilgrim offers us a way ahead together but not Abraham the father, him we claim as our own and no one else, rather he is called friend of God (Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23; Quran 4: 125). Abraham's life, as we know it from our scriptures and from our traditions, contains some special lessons for us on the way of the pilgrim.

b) Hindu-Christian Dialogue:

A view of over 150 years of Hindu Christian dialogue reveals significant trends and future challenges. The founder of the *Arya Samaj*, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, who is the author of these trends, refused Christ and Christianity and never thought that Hindus could learn anything of value from Christians. He was the authoritative Hindu source for his engagement with Christians, developing his theological judgments about Christians with the single aim of evidencing the irrationality and falsity of the tradition. On the other hand, Roy, Sen, Vivekananda and Gandhi in their unlike ways, accepted Jesus, but remained away from the Church and its doctrines. While affirming the emphasis of Jesus, each

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[180] Ali Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Quran* 3: 65, New Revise Edition, (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1989) p. 144.

[181] *The Holy Quran* 3:68, p. 145.

[182] Madigan Daniel, "Christian Muslim Dialogue", *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue, (ed.), Cornille Catherine* (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), p. 254.

Hindu thinker gave significance to a different feature of Jesus' life and teaching: for instance, Vivekananda spoke of Jesus' renunciation and his no-dual experience, Gandhi saw Jesus as the incarnation of satyagraha or non-violent resistance entirely based on the Sermon on the Mount.

A Hindu tradition not interested in institutional Christianity, in the absence of any continuous engagement with Christian theology or Christian tradition, this tradition can be ignored, whereas theological giants such as Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhav and recent voices like Vivekananda, Gandhi or Radhakrishnan are among the few Hindus with expertise in Christian theology, who can be relied on for their understanding of Christianity and Christ. It stays difficult to hold deep dialogue between the traditions. Most Hindus today believe that proselytization remains the principal concern of Christians and suspect that Christian interest in dialogue is still part of a larger evangelical agenda.

Gandhi refused to agree with Christian doctrines of the uniqueness of Jesus, as well as the atoning significance of his crucifixion. Vivekananda opposed Christian ultimate destiny or eschatological teachings and emphasis on human sinfulness, and highlighted the contradiction in the argument for the existence of created soul. This legacy, with rare exceptions, continues today, and works as an impediment to constructive dialogue. It must be instructive that the largest converts from Hinduism to Christianity came from the untouchable castes. They witnessed and experienced their own religious traditions as oppressive and as destroying their dignity and self-worth. For such people the message of Jesus Christ is inclusive love of God, and accepting them as they are in a community asserting human values and equality are liberating them.[183]

The future of Hindu Christian dialogue is not certain one may concur with Klostermaier (1989) that Hindu Christian dialogue should strongly express wisdom and knowledge, while acknowledging unhappiness at the absence of theological engagement amongst these traditions. Renewed theological engagement between Hinduism and Christianity requires the valuable chronological rational expression of persons of religious commitment, illustrated in the works of the great thinkers such as Sankara, Ramanuja, St Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine with the emphasis on theological depths of each tradition.[184] Hindu Christian dialogue could be related with justice, with the role and obligation of religion in surviving methods of oppression and domination. Hindu Christian dialogue

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[183] Ibid, p. 343
[184] Ibid, p. 344

needs a new interest and energy. It is rather likely that this infusion, contrary to the belief of Klostermaier (1989) will come from Hindu and Christian communities external to India. In many of these communities, the United States for example, the obstacles to dialogue, such as conditions engendered by the politics of nationalism and proselytization, are not relevant. The conditions are more conducive for mutual learning and practice.

Conclusion: Towards a Pragmatic of Inter-religious Dialogue

The evolution of religious attitude in human beings often leads to the conclusion that religion is a non-obligatory neurocognitive attribute of the species Homo sapiens. This in itself doesn't provide guidance on how to be spiritual, yet it would make readers more stable with the concept that their diversion of religious occurrence is reasonable, which has an ancestry and genesis in the evolution of our species, that religious belief is not unusual or weak way of being. It is co-opted somehow for the pursuit of assistances for the wellbeing of human beings. An evolutionary pattern for such religious belief appears to be persistent in its aim to experience the numinous, the supernatural which appears to human beings as outside their daily life. So to the question why a religious belief is so integral and significant to many humans may be answered by saying that it is part of our biological hereditary, like the cognitive ability for acquiring a language.

I. Evolution and Religious Belief:

The experiences of God and of the universe are impressive achievements of integrated development of the human mind. The neurocognitive abilities which nurture the imaginative scientists and artists that occupy the hearts and minds of advanced humankind with legends and lessons have evolvable origins. In the genesis of analysis that makes one human, there are two separate concepts that were not explored adequately in the past. Lately it was shown that these two concepts, namely 'sociability' and 'intelligence' would lead to the present analysis of the evolutionary bases of religious ideology in advanced species and subspecies of Homo sapiens.[1] Why is religion so significant to humanity? It is our biological heritage: it is a choice, like the cognitive ability for language acquisition. From 25 million to 13 million years ago there occurred the appearance of grazing mammals, Proconsul qualified as a true ape bigger, stronger and smarter. From time onwards the pages for the appearance of the great apes is used. It is significant that sociability and intelligence are necessary to engage in religious thinking and theological creativity. Margaret Rappaport and Christopher Corbally were fascinated by the large genetic diverse of Miocene apes. These are the origin of human beings' chief biological

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[1] Margaret Boone Rappaport and Christopher J. Corbally, *The Emergence of Religion in Human Evolution,* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), P. 4.

traits, many of our intensities and a genetic variety which was lost in smaller groups of primitive hominids. The flexibility of apes is also used in a large deal of religious belief within believers, religious leadership who also make use of the greater apes' tendency for periodic emotionality. The evolution of religious bonding, an ability that depends on the adjustment in all biological structures; it does not rest on a simple add on method which sees in its manifestation and co-ordination. Religious perspective should be one of the human specie's most phenotypic neurocognitive attributes. It could be deeply emotional and very intense in comparison to other mammals.[2]

The origin of a Universal morality later found in Homo sapiens, Sam Harris argues, is a universal scientific and common-sense suggestion to the evaluation of virtuous systems. He rejects cultural relativism's attempt to undermine the universalizability of moral beliefs in pointing out that our moral cognition has been the species need for a realistic evaluation of the right and wrong. If morality is as older as Homo erectus then Harris' universal concept of morality is significant. It's in reply to a group necessity to encounter the conflicts of various norms and values, whose resolution permits the group to go with hope and better understanding. Harris makes the global concept of morality that he speaks of in terms of right and wrong facts about human and animal welfare that could be in principle known by simply associated with the states of brain and the states of values. Once consciousness is admitted to the evolution, the realities to be known by the experience of conscious beings could change. Homo-erectus were endued with a brain twice the size of the brain of the hominids. We search from other sciences which make moral systems in Homo erectus legitimate in relation to his way of life and his struggle to survive.[3] Just as the moral cognitive ability is a species fact as Harris contends, the ability to form religious beliefs is a neurocognitive attribute of the human species. Thus, we may trace some of our cultural beliefs including the religious belief into antiquity that we begin to understand the depth the roots of our religiosity have dug into.[4]

Without the development in the size of the brain of members of the genus Homo, there would not have been the development of the ability to form religious beliefs in Homo sapiens. This evolutionary fact needs to be significantly acknowledged by the sections of contemporary Western society that believe in general that religion involves less ability and

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[2] Ibid, pp.15-16
[3] Ibid., p. 94
[4] Ibid, Cf., p. 122.

education. Such a perspective results from a wrong assessment of religious beliefs based solely on the ways many a time the religious institutions conduct the affairs. It may be a logical decision in response to the stresses enforced by the conflict within the findings of advanced science and traditional religious doctrines. The acceptance of scientific discoveries has continually carried a tremendous force of dislike from traditional institutions and scientific understanding of people who assist religious beliefs. Religion seemed to be a mark of less intelligent of the species, unless it harmonizes itself with the discourse of biology, it would be relegated to the domain of superstition.[5]

Science and religion takes an intelligent species having the features of self-consciousness, self-reflection, and self-control, creative conceptualizations of the spiritual and human interaction with it and application of spiritual characters to human beings in the form of ethics, mythology, and theology for humans in the millions of years that has passed by. Hence it could be seen that religion is a forward move in the path to human progress as the brain organs and neural capacities supportive to the economy and socio-cognitive niche of Homo sapiens were the same organs that gave rise to religious belief.

Theology is consistent with the assumptions about the relation between humans as well as the supernatural being. The significant aims of theological creativity, practiced by religious heads, are to explain the new in light of the old for the religions. What they believe is to assign to human behavior in the light of supernatural direction for all these culturally different peoples who have their own elaborated rules of behavior. These resemblances and variances don't end up in mere practices but exposes the cognitive and neurological complexity of human theological concepts. Human cultures have theologies, hence theology could be defined again as well-constructed doctrines about the relation between humans and the supernatural, that consist with the motifs ideas of a culture. It is not derogatory of scientific beliefs, rather it recognizes their evolutionary origins, compels cognitive derivation and potential uses in the future, in the pursuit of eco-theological aim to guard the natural environment.[6] The feature of transcendence appears is significantly natural, pan-human way, the accounts of deities, human and supernatural places exhibit common attributions. They have a significant potential in supporting the social human

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[5] Ibid, Cf., p. 128.
[6] David G Horrell, Cherryl Hunt and Christopher Southgate, *Greening Paul: Rereading the Apostle in a Time of Ecological Crisis,* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), p. 213.

groups as well as natural or supernatural sacred spaces as pertaining to the religious beliefs.

Immanence and transcendence give humans a sense of integrating the natural and supernatural universe and reassuring that the deities and regions exist at a surrounding that humans may aspire throughout the life. The theologies comprise reincarnation; the supernatural regions are a place that the soul reappears. A transcendent state of existence where human beings are totally free of pain and want is common to many theological systems to reach that region. Interpretations of spiritualism in objects and people form a significant part of theologies and mythologies. The human support that powerful force are near as well as a sense of oneness with natural and supernatural regions; hence they are oneness of the two in the universe. Transcendence gives to humans a reassurance that mightier forces dwell in our midst to help us and give humans a sense of control.[7]

Those who challenge religious beliefs slip from an experience that is not apparent to the universe to a direct sensorial experience. The reality of that sensorial experience and different uses by human beings are indeed of this universe could be logically set aside by believers during worship. The believer does not care whether the religious doctrines and rituals make the real an aspect of the other-worldly real. The greatest sacred experience is that it creates an unstable equivalence within the natural and the spiritual. The sacred provides an altered state of consciousness can be easily obtained and left behind when religious activities are conducted. Human beings are largely progressive from his origins within the ancient apes, he sought release, recreation and escapes the self-consciousness which evolution handed him, it is a burden that needs healing and human experience tells right from wrong and uses that knowledge. No marvel that we live tentatively to relish the sacred ritual experience with our fellow beings that can reduce human burden, may be at least for a little while.[8]

This way of defending religious belief based on evolutionary dynamics may meet with opposition from the dogmatic adherents of orthodox religious groups that believe in creation. However, when we examine the complexities of the evolutionary foundations of cultural, moral and religious abilities, it is amazing that it can be transferred to a new artificial species. Some advancement in robotics and human improvements proves that the

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[7] Margaret Boone Rappaport and Christopher Corbally J, *The Emergence of Religion in Human Evolution,* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), p. 213.
[8] Ibid, p. 215

synthetic intelligences are created now.[9] Pope Francis says that, "Evolution … is not inconsistent with the notion of creation,"[10] also wrote that, "Machines are useful but they do not think."[11] Digitally founded beings are already an exchanging code. In other words, a dialogue between science and religion can go a long way in articulating the neural basis of religious beliefs through natural evolution of human beings.

II. Neurological Basis of Religious Belief:

James Ashbrook was the first theologian who used Neuro-theology to defend the legitimacy of religious beliefs. He began to study Neuroscience, and by coining the new term, he became part of the development of neuro-theology. Nevertheless, it was ambiguous and complex, and till today there is no clear definition for the term in theology and religion. The science of neuro-theology tries to contribute logical and scientific reasons for religious experiences established on neuro-scientific specifications. Neuro-theology's purpose is to study theology based on a neuro-scientific view; to realize that human beings have an inborn ambition for religion and spiritual myths.[12]

Ultimately the most significant of cognitive neuroscience is the better understanding of human thinking and interaction with geographical region. This associates to our perception that relies on the external reality to which the brain endlessly presents to our consciousness. Neuro-theology is the unique attitude to investigate epistemological questions which came from neuroscience and theology. Hence incorporating religious and scientific appearances in the field of neuro-theology may yield the basis on which scholars from various disciplines may deal with the most significant problems that the humanity is facing, namely a crisis of values. Neuro-theology has the potency to explain the neurological basis of the human mind along with the spiritual experiences and analyse the theological discussions. There are lots of potential richness in the world religions, thus the neuro-theology should be diligent on such issues and seek to advance the same. Nevertheless, if neuro-theology is ultimately successful in its ends, better understanding of the human mind and its biology, it has the potential to solve problems created by the

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[9] Asa Fitch, 2019, "'Thinking' Chips Market Heats Up." Wall Street Journal, May 20, B4.

[10] Josephine McKenna, 2014. "Pope Francis: 'Evolution is not Inconsistent with the Notion of Creation." *Religion New Service Online*. October 27. Accessed March 28, 2019. https://religionnews.com/2014/10/27/pope-francis-evolution-inconsistent-notion creation/

[11] Asia News. 2019. "Pope: Machines Are Useful but They Do Not Think," February 25. Accessed March 28, 2019. www.asianews.it/news-en/Pope:-Machines-are-useful-but-they-do-not-think-46345

[12] Ali Akbar Ziaee, "Neurothelogy and Revelation Phenomenon," *How theology Looks at Neurotheology,* Balkan Journal of Philosophy, 2015.

human beings. It can even build a bridge between the science of neurology with the intangibleness and sensitiveness of theology.

For Andrew B. Newberg 'Neuro-theology' is a unique field of scholarly investigation that seeks to understand the relation between the brain and theology; mind and religion. In his book *Principles of Neuro-theology*, he takes us back to the ancient religions of Hinduism and Buddhism and his remarks are quite relevant in Neuro-theology as well as in the field of inter-religious dialogue. He points out that the relation between the human mind and spiritualism has been considered for thousands of years. This intersection was identified in the ancient Hindu sacred scripture of the Upanishads in which it was actualized that something within us modifies us to search and experience the creation via our cognitive and sensory processes to discover our own sense of spiritualism. Neweberg quotes from the *Taittriya Upanishad*:

> Between the two palates there hangs the uvula, like a nipple-that is the starting-point of *Indra* (the lord). Where the root of the hair divides, there he opens the two sides of the head and saying *Bhu*, he enters *Agni* (the fire); saying *Bhuvas*, he enters *Vayu* (air); Saying *Suvas*, he enters *Aditya* (sun); saying *Mahas*, he enters *Brahman*. He there obtains lordship, he reaches the lord of the mind. He becomes lord of speech, lord of sight, lord of hearing, lord of knowledge. Nay, more than this. There is the *Brahman* whose body is ether, whose nature is true, rejoicing in the senses (*prana*), delighted in the mind, perfect in peace and immortal.[13]

This *Upanishadic* narration reveals the significance of the body and the brain in the spiritual attainment. Neuro-theology is new effort at discerning how the study of the human mind and brain associates to the creation of religious experiences. The scientific side of neuro-theology helps to develop adequate definitions and methodology to adopt in understanding our religious experiences through interpreting the data. The religious component should maintain a subjective sense of spiritualism, a phenomenological assessment of ultimate reality which may or may not contain a divine presence and purpose in life and adherence to different doctrinal processes and an elaborate analysis of religion from the theological perspective.

Buddhist and Hindu writings have made large contributions in evaluating the human mind and have given us a science of psychology that concentrates on human self-awareness and the emotional affection of human beings. According to them, the self and human

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[13] Andrew B. Newberg, *Principles of Neurotheology*, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), p. 2.

consciousness can be changed through spiritual practice. Buddhism expounds the significant components of human consciousness that co-ordinates into the four seals of belief.[14] i) '*Dukka*' focuses on suffering; it is the worldwide aspect of the human existence. ii) '*Anatta*' refers to no-self in particular, there is no determinate existing self in the world, and all things are co-ordinated. iii) '*Annucca*' relates to impermanency, that nothing in universe lasts, the individual achievement and happiness should never be united with transitory phenomena. iv) '*Nirvana*', a release form suffering, does dwell through the surrendering of affection to the false sense of self that the mind holds.[15]

Each of the above aspects may be considered from a neuro-theological perspective. One can relate these significant hypotheses to different expressions of the human brain and psyche. Suffering has a substantial purpose in the fields of the brain which are involved in the stress response and negative feelings play a role in suffering and finally have long-term effects on the human body. Thus emotional suffering may be felt in the brain similarly to physical pain. Second seal of no-self may have physiological links because there are specific areas of the brain and human beings which add to human sense of self. Third seal of mortality, there are particular brain structures which encourage sense of change and permanence. The brain itself seems to build for change via the action of neuroplasticity that relates to the capacity of brain to change its structure and function. Neuro-physiological associates of nirvana yet to be accepted, different elements of loss of the sense of self have been affiliated with particular brain function and through the four seals one may understand the human mind.

Without any modern scientific method, Buddhism succeeded in representing the intricate mechanism of the mind. Buddhism also centered significant care on consciousness as energy that is intensely interrelated with the brain and with the human being. This has set up a biomedical paradigm in Eastern ideology based on how energy moves through the body. While not using the same concept of energy, current scientific i.e., psycho-neuro-immunology and psycho-neruo-endocrinology have described the link between the brain and our mind. These area bridges Eastern and Western biomedical paradigms and of course neuro-theology might render a substantial source for the future.

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[14] Tenzin Gyatso (Fourteenth Dalai Lama), *The World of Tibetan Buddhism: An Overview of its Philosophy and Practice,* Translated by Thupten Jinpa, (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 1995), p. 42
[15] Andrew B Newberg, Op. Cit., pp. 4-5.

Similar thoughts of the human body's energy or Qi articulated as Chi could be found in Ayurvedic Medical practices which developed in India[16] also consider the human health and psychological welfare from the world-view of the component of energy flow in the human substance. Through manipulating energy the health, both physical and mental and spiritualism could be renewed. Finally balance energy be illuminated in which the mind is able to link with a significant reality. When Eastern traditions approached the concept of mind and consciousness more immediately, Western concepts of religious belief usually had not focus on the relation between the mind and religious phenomena. The Holy Bible itself speaks very little about specific mental and physiological procedures. Nevertheless, the specification of human infirmities and the evil actions which are performed by human beings indicates a deeper interest in the human psyche. The Holy Bible mostly doesn't determine how forgiveness, love, devotion and redemption come about other than through religion and religious adherence. Thus the significant relation between the mind that abides human beings to be human and the spirit that abides human beings to higher divine realm of existence.

Interactions between science and religion have been exposed by Ian Barbour who distinguished four types of interactions. The first step of interaction is one of conflicts in that it is perceived only science or religion could present a disciplined analysis of the universe, exclusive of each other. This step includes those defending scientific materialism as biologists Jacques Monod or Richard Dawkins.[17]According to their view, religion becomes a human conduct as part of the consequences of evolution and it doesn't present objective reality as science does. The religious equivalent of this conflict is seen in those who believe in Biblical doctrine of creation. Here the Bible is conceived as literally true; hence it substitutes scientific facts that are not in accordance with the Biblical accounts. The argument between proponents of the theory of evolution and the doctrine of creation, here neither the Holy Bible nor science is absolutely right. Due to the large variances between their descriptions of the origins of life and universe both systems seem to be reciprocally exclusive.[18]

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[16] Marc S. Micozzi, *Fundamentals of Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, (New York, NY: Churchill Livingstone, 1996), p. 59.

[17] Jacques Monod, Chance *and Necessity*, (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1972), Dawkins, R, *The God Delusion*, (New York: NY: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), p. 42.

[18] Andrew B. Newberg, Op. Cit, p. 14.

With the developing growth of the reformation and the renaissance, chronology began to prove hostility between science and religion. This began with the Copernican revolution that with Galileo's assistance burst the Catholic Church's view of an earth-centered, designed world. This set of a hostility lasted for hundreds of years even today. Charles Darwin's expansion theory of evolution was continues substantial field for science and religion. The ultimate result of the science and religion debate could be neuro-theological field that offer to any hostile relation between science and religion,

The second suggestion that many natural scientist have adopted is the version accounted by Stephen J. Gould as 'non-overlapping magisterial,'[19] the concept that religion and science are both permissible, only they identify to domains that are totally separate. Thus religion and science shouldn't say anything about each-other. Nevertheless, they are not considered to be reciprocally undivided only allows information about two distinct attributes of human existence. Thus, science does not conflict with religion as it explains human understanding of the universe while religion interprets message of God to the universe. These concepts uphold both, it doesn't nurture any dialogue between them and a mutual interaction of each is off-limits to the other.

Some of the questions are never answerable from a scientific view, for example, why the Big Bang did happen and why does the universe exist. On the other hand, religion may address some of the issues that have relevance for the day to day human life [20] like anxiety, joy, trust and death. Science and religion also share certain methodological principles which are not alike but are amenable to substantive dialogue. Holmes Rolston proposed that religion depicts and associates human experience, whereas science does the same with observational information.[21] Purpose of science and religion is within definite categories which form the base of the accepted practice, they are not isomorphic they are similar. Thus, there exists scope for a mutually beneficial dialogue amongst science and religion that ultimately illumines the human condition. From the perspective of neuro-theology, scientific and religious phenomena could be most significant and substantiate a basic link between spiritualism and biological conceptions of the human being. Thus, neuro-theology should allow an open a number of unlike views as a nexus in which those from the religious as well as scientific side can come together to research deep issues of human

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[19] Stephen J. Gould, *Rocks of Ages*, (New York: Ballantine, 1999), p. 15
[20] David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, (New York, NY: Seabury, 1975), p. 42.
[21] Holmes Rolston, *Science and Religion: A Critical Survey,* (New York: Random House, 1987), p.45.

beings in a constructive mode. It should be stressed that neuro-theology to grow as a field, it is imperative that one stays open to all the unlike perspectives that are religious or spiritual, cultural or scientific. We also find the particular traditions such as meditation or prayer create transformations in a physical process including those related to the cardiovascular and digestive system and immune system. Neuro-theological research should describe actual negative significances of religious and spiritual beliefs.

A philosopher whose work should be regarded as significant to neuro-theology was Baruch Spinoza who based his theological and philosophical concepts on mathematics and science. In reality his concept of God being imputed to the glory and clarity in mathematics, particularly geometry, furthered the cause of integrating science and religion. Spinoza understood the natural laws as signalling the divine presence in the universe, "The universal laws of nature according to which all things happen and are determined are nothing but God's eternal decrees, which always involve eternal truth and necessity."[22] Moreover, Spinoza believed that through human concepts, philosophic and scientific strives; human being could know the order of the universe and the existence of God. He stresses the physical sciences that are highly confirmative of neuro-theology as a way of understanding the human being and perspective of the universe via brain.

There are four basic goals of neuro-theology, namely: i) to improve human understanding of mind and brain, ii) to improve human understanding of religion and theology, iii) to improve the human condition in the context of well-being, and iv) to improve the human context of religion and spiritualism.[23] Other field that would add to neuro-theological studies is problems concerning with terrorism and the terrorist mind setup. It is not clear how and why some individuals follow extreme religious or spiritual views.[24] Neuro-theological researches has the possibility to evaluate thoroughly which types of individual is most likely to follow such a path, perhaps offer method for appropriately redirecting them. The knowledge to disincline why there should be hatred, feeling of dislike and exclusiveness are promoted and assumed by an individual or of a group which could have significant outcomes for universal peace. The fourth goal of neuro-theology may develop religious and spiritual welfare of universal humanity in general. Neuro-theology might

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[22] Richard Mason, *The God of Spinoza: A Philosophical Study*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 168 /24

[23] Andrew B Newberg, *Principles of Neurotheology*, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), p. 18.

[24] Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence,* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), p. 53.

provide a setting in which the developed apprehension of religious and theological phenomena lead to pragmatic application in which individuals engage with their spiritual end. Whereas it's not clear that what mechanism could achieve in the end, whenever there is developed knowledge there is the possibility to grow. In the discourse of theology and religion, spiritual growth is envisaged and neuro-theology supports another mechanism by which growth may occur.[25] About neuro-theology there is often a criticism that it becomes of more spiritualism than science. Nevertheless, human beings have always utilized variant methods from ritual, prayer and meditation to starvation, sustained intense physical activity and pharmacological substances to help spiritual states.[26] Thus the concepts bring spiritual mechanism subsisted since thousands of years. The significant issue is how to integrate these approaches into a specific spiritual paradigm; this will be the true challenges of neuro-theological research.

In order to discuss the four foundational ends depicted above one should realize that all finally rest upon one significant question namely, how do we know the true nature of realty? Though 'soul' is an appealing term, it has come to mean various things depending on the inquirer's view-point. Plato and Aristotle viewed the soul to be the substance of the human being. It's not clear whether soul should exist outside the human being. Ancient Egyptian beliefs signified that the soul upholds into the next domain after death. Whereas Hinduism believed that the soul is considered to be the immortal part of the human beings, and has effect over the body. Thus, Plato also viewed the soul to admit the reason, emotions and desires. Augustine depicted the soul as "Special substance, endowed with reason, adapted to rule the body."[27] The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the soul as,

> The innermost aspect of man that which is of greatest value in him, that by which he is most especially in God's image: 'soul' signifies the spiritual principle in human.[28]

These definitions obviously propose that the soul is not the brain or the mind, the soul seems to have a deep relation with the brain and mind. If soul has reason, emotions and desires the essence of which we are, that shows that the brain has an intimate relation to the

[25] Andrew B. Newberg , *Op. cit*, p. 20.

[26] Thomas B. Roberts (ed.). *Psychoactive Sacramentals: Essays on Entheogens and Religion,* (San Francisco, CA: Council on Spiritual Practices, 2001), p. 54.

[27] Joseph M. Colleran (trans.), *St. Augustine the Greatness of the Soul: The Teacher,* (New York: The Newman Press, 1978), p. 40.

[28] *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* Second Edition, (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1997), 363

soul. Theistically it is not essential to engage in neuro-theology, subsequently there may be extending concepts of deity also concept of ultimate reality could be debated in relation to brain science. It is significant not to suppose that one can decrease the concepts of God to biology or to equate all concept of God as one. There are various traditions of God that we must keep distinct in neuro-theological analysis. It is also significant to determine the just variations and similarities which often found in experiential or phenomenological substances of religion, whereas controversies are often found in religious scripture and doctrines. Neuro-theology invariably considers distinct faith and doctrines as it sees to a deeper understanding of their relationship with the human mind, and also asserts some acknowledgement of the value, significance and exactness of religion and science. Neuro-theology may help to deal issues such as the nature of religion, existence of God, the ultimate reality and human consciousness. Thus our relation with God, the absolute ultimate reality; neuro-theology emerges balanced to make a significant attempt at dealing such issues. Other theological, philosophical and scientific issues have also addressed these questions and it seems that neuro-theology has unique advantage of integrating these views. This is the discipline that searches to unite science and theology. Neuro-theology should prepare to take full benefit of the fields of science such as functional brain imaging, cognitive neuroscience, psychology and genetics. Also neuro-theological scholar should be ready to engage with the theological issues. Theology extends to develop and exchange from the dogmatic perspectives of the past, through natural theology when regarding the purpose for formulating neuro-theology as a domain of spirituality.

III. The Global Ethics:

In 1990, Hans Kung, the Swiss Catholic theologian, initiated the Weltethos[29] Project, the proposition of *Global Ethics*, which is delineated in his book *Global Ethic and Global Responsibilities*. His ideas were explored at the Parliament of World Religions in 1993. Global ethics does not mean a unified or universal concept or single religion that can override all existing religions of the world. It rather aims to bind obligatory values and symmetric concepts on human motives and beliefs. He established this project of his concept of a peaceful world, his principle being, "No peace between nations without peace among religions, no peace between religions without dialogue." On this basis in 1997, the

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[29] Christopher Gohl, (2018), "Weltethos for Business: Building Shared Ground for a Better World", Humanistic Management Journal 3, 161-186, or http://www.dgphil2008.de/fileadmin/download/Sektionsbeitraege/14-2Dierksmeier.pdf.

Universal Ethics Project was established by UNESCO, which insists that global ethics, has crossed the cultural barriers and demonstrates common ethical norms through dialogue, also trying to solve human conflicts by pursuing the common features of unlike cultures.

Global ethics is the code of conduct or principles, the theories that decide a person's moral values, expected by the group to which each individual belongs. Global ethics can also be called the manual, the code of morals for the universal human being. We are all aware of the practices of terrorism, hoarding and drug abuse, war and conflicts and so on increasing in the Global society. Because of the human selfish motives, we have lost the human values in our everyday lives. To create a society with a lower crime rate, where all human beings can live safe, peaceful lives, we need to regain the humanistic values. Thus each and every human being has the responsibility to keep God's creation as good. Thus it is said where there is peace, justice and harmony, where all human beings can live a life of respect and dignity without fear, there God exists and there God lives.

Aristotle proposed the most influential theories on ethics, he argued that moral abilities and moral virtues develop in human lives through constant practice and repetition, when family as well as communities think, feel and behave morally. Such important human values as courage, generosity, temperance, self-control, sociability, modesty, fairness or justice, are all virtues acquired through this kind of habituation. A number of modern thinkers have returned to the Greek thinker Aristotle's view, claiming that greater emphasis should be given to the development of moral values. And more attention should be paid to the human character, there after we can see development in the virtues which can make human beings morally worthy. Moral values such as truthfulness, honesty, forgiveness are very difficult to follow because we have not realized the significance of values in our life.

Global ethics is addressed to all the governments and their respective leaders to implement the principles and precepts of a global ethic, who can take ethical considerations to the legal underpinnings of international society that can strengthen the international rule of law. The states can give emphasis to ethical considerations within international and intergovernmental organizations. Thus the governments have crucial ethical responsibility within their territories that they may have order and basic moral values in their life.

Along with the nations and the government there are four more influential and powerful associations on the global stage, namely, the Church, the International Organizations, the

Transnational Corporations and the Global Civil Society. They have been praised for the most valuable contributions to global development, their corporations, power, influence and responsibilities are calculated in a global ethic, the economic power has much more weight than that of some of the states. The non-governmental organizations, for example the Church, other religious associations/organizations, can mobilize the world and draw attention to the global problems, such as environmental or human rights problems; they have achieved in the past a great success.[30] For social control and for all their international relations all the societies have their moral principles. No society is able to survive without loyalty, trust, solidarity, love and happiness, which lays great emphasis on human relationships. This indicates the willingness and the obligations of the rich nations to come forward to help the poor nations, thus there is no national border for global-ethics.

Global ethics aims at the minimal standards any community should observe. Persuaded by their cultural heritage and social past experience they often have different views about the values their society should uphold and specific design they should pursue. Accepting the fact of diversity of cultures, a global ethic provides the minimal requirements like an appropriate social imagination and promotion of cultural pluralism. Ethics examines the judgments in which we justify any individual case of action: for example, a conscientious person may say we should not write anything on the public platform because it is public property, and public should take care and respect the same, thus the human being should take care of private as well as public morality.

There are some repeated themes that come in all cultures and traditions, which could be an inspiration for a global ethic. With the ethical thrust on relieving suffering, there is a possibility of providing security to all human beings. Confucius states that every man is moved by fear and horror, affection and mercy, it is the moral teaching of every tradition, and religion that one should treat his fellow beings equally. There is a deeper human urge for peace, co-existence and avoidance of suffering of the world, which consists of elements to be integrated in a new global ethics: human rights, democratic principles, public accountability and the developing ethos of evidence and proofs are the prime elements for consideration. Thus the purpose of the United Nations bodies has assumed a certain ideological authenticity. Human rights, have found legal and institutional expression in a

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[30] Paul Streeten, (2002), "Reflection on Social and Antisocial Capital*", Social Capital and Economic Development: Well-Being in Developing Countries, (*eds.), Jonathan Isham, Thomas Kelly, & Sunder Ramaswamy, Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, p. 51

number of treaties, European convention for the protection of human rights. Today the idea of human rights is still challenged authoritarian governments.

Aristotle says that the human being is a social animal, he lives in society, in the company of others, and he wants to live in peace and harmony in the universe.[31] Without ethics, human beings would revert to the primitive stage. Ethics precede the law and orders, and right values, since all socio-political actions are concerned with values and choice. Since education opens the human potential to understanding and tolerance, these are taught in our educational institutions. The mass media is one of the most powerful mediums which influence the younger minds, even here violence, humiliation and frivolity pollute the human mind rather than elevate it. Thus each of our institutions needs to dedicate itself to ethical norms. The sources of such re-dedication in the world of multifarious religions and ethical traditions, will give them the spiritual resources to lead towards a solution of our ethical, notional, social, economic and religious tensions. Though the universal religions have different doctrines, yet all of them advocate a common standard of ethics. The world faiths advocate self-restraint, obligations, responsibilities and sharing. They advocate the virtues of humility, compassion and justice. All of them assess the maze of life and in their own way discern the patterns which give meaning to the whole. Thus surely our global problems can be solved by sharing a common ethical base.

Assuring human beings all over the universe a decent and meaningful life requires tremendous physical resources and many significant changes in the governing systems. This is the most demanding and challenging as the world cognitive factors, related to part of the development and calling for the same urgent attention. Arnold Toynbee said: "Our age is the first generation since the dawn of history in which mankind dares to believe it is practical to make the benefits of civilization available to the whole human race."[32]

Achieving substantial improvements will depend on the co-operation, kindness and compassion of millions of human beings all over the universe. Assuring a better future for all may involve sacrifices which will require profound changes in attitudes and behaviour, not least in people's social priorities: the educational system, the patterns of consumption and even the most basic beliefs about how the individual should relate to society. Thus the

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[31] Aristotle, Politics, in 23 Volumes, Vol. 21, translated by H. Rackham, (London: Harvard University Press, 1944).

[32] Brynn Vaughan, *Global Governance Legitimacy and Legitimations,* (U.K., Essex: Ed-Tech Press, 2020), p. 19.

governments and the local leaders will have to play a significant role in convincing the citizens of the need for change and in suggesting refreshing political, economic and social strategies

The actualities of the developing global neighbourhoods require a global ethics which applies equally to all those caught up in global affairs. Its efficacy will depend on the ability of people and administration to transcend narrow self-interests and agree that the interest of humanity will be served by acceptance of a set of human rights and responsibilities. The idea is that the values and principles of a global ethics should be the shared points of reference, providing ethical and moral guidance to the world. Today the world is adversely affected by religious ideology, the extremism and violence preached and practiced in the name of religion. Religious fundamentalism is increasing day by day because some supposedly religious people believing deeply in the fundamentals of their faith actually exaggerate its practices. Yet it cannot be denied that all the religions of the world reject violence and believe that force never should be used to advance their cause. Thus interpreting of scriptures within any given religion is to note that the entire world says that they support peace as well as harmony

Peace is the most desired for redemption in all the world's religions. Everyone desires peace, the ultimate reality that can bring tranquillity to human beings. The world religions praise the peace and tranquilly of God that brings harmony in the society and the nations. The outward peace in the Abrahamic religions has social, political and historical dimensions. The love of God can break down the barriers of violence, and conflict between people and can build a foundation for lasting peace. The political and the social field has to be built by the efforts of the human hands thus those who are blessed by God and have the inner peace are mainly responsible for the peace makers, reconciling conflict. The purpose of world Religious Scriptures is to promote peace in the world; there are few examples from different scriptures: "I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid; and I will remove evil beast from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land."[33] "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God."[34]

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[33] *The Holy Bible* RSV, *Leviticus 26:6,* (Bangalore: Collins, Theological publication in India, 1988), pp. 46-47.

[34] Ibid, Mathew 5:9.

> If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel make ye peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other. Then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of Allah; but if it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair: for Allah loves those who are fair (and just).[35]

> The Lord lives in the heart of every creature. He turns them round and round upon the wheel of Maya. Take refuge utterly in Him. By his grace you will find supreme peace, and the state which is beyond all change.[36]

However, the people of different faiths have historically and even today, resorted to violence at times to settle their conflicts. People use religion to justify their non-religious objectives for power or aggression, for self-defence many religions have a just war. The creation of a more peaceful world will require committed efforts over the long run to create conditions for peace.

To promote ethical norms the sovereign states are the primary vehicles of change, and are the main target, also the electronic media and the multinational organizations which are an increasing power in the global view. It is essential and crucial to promote the global ethics, the religions of the world with convergent belief systems and influence should cooperate in taking up the challenge to realize this goal. The world religions can meet with open minds enriching the global urgency and the problems that human beings face today. The role of ethical standards requires a struggle with worldly crises for which the religions of the world have to promote these global ethical standards to ease the task of disseminating such norms throughout the world. The religious leaders assist the cause of the justification of the global ethics through their own educational institutions, mass communication and religious institutions, which include representatives of the world religions

Since we have old and new, ethnic, national, social, economic and religious tensions, they threaten the peaceful atmosphere required for a better world. In this situation we should have a vision for peace and co-operation in society, which only dialogue can bring through ethical groupings and with the religious sharing responsibility for the care of the universe. The Parliament of World Religions which was held in Chicago in 1893, proclaimed a Declaration of Global Ethics: To strengthen human rights in international law and justice, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human rights, elaborated by the Vienna Declaration on human rights and programme for action. The global ethic is no

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[35] Ali Yusuf Abdullah, *The Holy Quran: Text, Translation & Commentary, New Revised Edition, Surah 49:9,* (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1989), p. 1341.
[36] *The Bhagavad Gita,* 18:61-62.

substitute for the scripture of any world religion; it provides the necessary common values, standards and basic attitudes. These common values and moral attitudes can be affirmed by all religions despite their dogmatic differences and can also be supported by non-believers. The Chicago Declaration has formulated the basic agreement as follows:

> All men are created equal was the soft whisper, 'therefore dialogue.' It becomes public voice at the inter-religious encounter of the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago.[37]

Thus the Chicago declaration affirmed that all the human beings should be treated humanely, do unto others as you want others to do unto you. This will be the rule of all the religious traditions. On this basis of two principles of universal religions, loyalty to culture of non-violence and respect for life, a just economic order, tolerance, truthfulness, and a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women. Minority Protection, constitutional safeguards and sociability should be promoted and cultural diversity encouraged, one should not suppress the poor, orphans, widows and so on.

The celebration of a centenary of the first ever parliament of world religions brought to bear very salient points, the direction of ensuring that the risk posed to humanity by poverty, genocide, terrorism, hunger and so on are eliminated. As long as people seek their individualistic welfare by suppressing others or nations seek their welfare by suppressing other nation's humanity, the world will not enjoy the peace that it deserves. The wellbeing of the society's interest should override the interest of individuals; they all find agreement in their diversity in playing their respective roles that the 1893 and 1993 parliaments advocated: "The parliaments are eloquent witnesses to assertions of religious identity and diversity and to be the ideal of unity amidst diversity."[38]

An Initial Declaration, endorsed by many of the religious and spiritual leaders in attendance, unanimously condemned the injustices to citizens, abuses to earth's ecosystems, poverty and hunger that weaken the human body and economic disparity that threaten many families with ruin. The following affirmations were made: a) That a common set of core values is found in the teachings of the religions, b) That this truth is already known, but yet to be lived in heart and action, c) There are an irrevocable,

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[37] Leonard Swidler, "The History of Inter-Religious Dialogue", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*,(ed.), Cornille Catherine, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), p. 4.

[38] Joel Beversluis, "The Parliaments and the Quest for a Global Ethic", *Sourcebook of the World's Religions: An Interfaith Guide to Religion and Spirituality* (eds.), Joel Beversluis, California: Novato, New World Library 2000), p.167.

unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations and religions. There already exist ancient guidelines for human behaviour. A global ethic espouses the view that individuals and nations are interdependent on each other, when a subset of a whole becomes defective and the defective portion is not treated quickly, the whole is likely to suffer. When society as a whole is healthy, the individual components are also healthy. A global ethic commits participants to respect life, dignity, individuality and diversity with the aim to phase out bigotry.

The global ethics ensures that humankind is considered one big family devoid of envy, jealousy, hatred or abuse of any kind, through kindness and generosity, embracing the culture of solidarity. Every individual must be accorded a fair share of respect, recognition or consideration, commitment to a culture of non-violence, respect, justice and peace striving to level out economic disparity among nations and citizens, to ensure that poverty and hunger is completely eliminated from the earth. In fact the ancient Indian value of "*Vasudaiva kutumbam*," the whole world is one family is the essence of a global ethics.

IV. Interreligious Dialogue and Global Ethics:

Interreligious dialogue has always stood for action and a common moral vision of the universe over sharing moral and theological ideas and legally following the vision of the ultimate reality. In the 21st century inter-religious dialogue has been emphasized very strongly. The Global Ethic is the most known example of dialogue which aimed at ethics and moral action. It is widely known since 143 leaders of the world religions from all over the world, signed up to it at the 1993 meeting of the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago. The Global Ethic condemned the hazardous state of the world, looting the natural resources or destroying it, whereas we have widespread poverty, and particularly violence, hostility, aggression, hatred and warfare in the name of religion are the revocable and restricted norms for all these areas of life, for families, communities, for races, nations and for the religions. These traces existed in ancient human behaviour which we can find in the teachings of the religions of the world. The German theologian, Hans Kung, stimulated the parliament to affirm four directives: The implication of a particular global ethic

  a) Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life,
  b) Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order,
  c) Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness,
  d) Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership

Between men and women.[39]

In a country where there is a secular atmosphere everyone experiences absolute religious liberty, the state government may not implement all people to embrace any specific religious-belief. Freedom of Religious belief is human birth and climacteric right. Specifically, the Indian constitution has given this secularism. Everyone has the freedom to express his/her own belief in this country or to adopt any religious belief. India is a diverse religious country and its Constitution gives religious freedom to all its citizens and for equivalence of religious-faith, thus secularism is our characteristic. The state of India doesn't have any official state religions; today whether secularism is truly abided in this country is another question to be studied.

In the present scenario progressing inter-religious dialogue, the concurrent has sought to contribute world-views together to challenge the human beings from various religious and spiritual views to unified voice and to address contemporary challenges of the universe, this ways is called inter-religious dialogue, that needs an understanding of person as a human being as well as an appreciating person's religious beliefs and the spirituality. The ultimate purpose of inter-religious dialogue is the incorporation of all the religious belief in secularism and in humanitarianism, through the deeper studies, sharing the easy and the difficult parts and exploring spiritual practices from other traditions. Inter-religious dialogue is an expansion of the spiritual practices from other traditions. Inter-religious dialogue is an expansion of the spiritual traditions of one's religious beliefs that might be a depiction of one's relation with the ultimate source of reality that is God. Often this reality is described as transcendent or beyond human understanding. Thus exploring these realities form different religious traditions in inter-religious dialogue tolerates without modifying particular mindset but ensconcing in proper subjectivity to it. Thus, by way of sharing with the human mind, religious beliefs become an integral thread of human experience to dialogue about the unknown problems in the modern world.[40]

Their purpose to work to bring universe together from unlike religious and spiritual life on this levels of dialogues are possible, neuro-theology has sought to address the neurological experimented thought and experience. Neuro-theology proves insight the common thread

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[39] Ernst R. Richard, (2013), "Academic Opportunities for Shaping a Better Future" *Dimensions of Goodness*, (ed.), Vittorio Hosle, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, p. 212.

[40] Taylor and Francis, *Neurotheology in interfaith Dialogue,* (Texas: Baylor University Medical Center, 2019), p. 296.

of religious belief all over the universe and the involvement in inter-religious dialogue. In this way, it shares the nature of human mind and religious beliefs enable the ability to dialogue with others. Each perspective strives to bring human and the divine into an intimate subjective relationship through the ritual, prayer and contemplation. The ultimate source of reality is observed in the contemplation of the Buddhist monk, the prayers of the nun, the repose and comfort of the regular Churchgoer and the daily prayers of the Muslim. With such diversity we may experience a common platform for both to a more significant self and a path to overcome defensiveness, hostility and lack of reality which permeates religious and cultural divides. This may not be a basis for universal agreement on what we have in common and therefore the relevance of inter-religious dialogue to build upon the commonalities and to articulate the differences without any prejudices.[41]

It is significant that inter-religious dialogue has potentiality given the immense religious and philosophical differences which subsist within the human beings. From the genesis of the creation, the tribes fought amongst themselves, and the wars and violence broke for centuries together. A growing and flourishing field of neuro-theology has engaged investigating into the religious ideal of neurological processes and functions. The religious have suggested significance of our brain functions in the exploitation of our emotional and spiritual lives with regard to the ultimate reality. All religions meet the unique aspect of spirit that can't be seen and touched. With the identity of moral self, for them real and permanent is the spiritual self, wherein lies the peace of God. A major religion of the world teaches that with the spiritual identity they become immortal, one with God, and united with each other. This way, unlike regions of the brain may communicate to minimize neuronal interferences and develop a calm state where religious conceptions of oneness and unity can appear. Thus, the human beliefs responses, thoughts and inhibitions are linked to God and religion, the sense of a union with God is linked to enlightenment and consciousness of the whole being is linked to the entire brain. The research has conveyed the religious experiences; many are physiological, holistic and causing functions of the brain throughout a religious experience. Studies analyses blood flow in the brains of nuns during focusing on prayer and observed that the act of prayer reduced blood flow that is known to create disorientation in the epileptic condition.[42]

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[41] Ibid, p. 295
[42] Ibid., pp. 296-297

Thus religious calibrations may start in particular neuroanatomical regions and extend throughout the brain and interact in complex neuronic networks to develop religious and spiritual encounters. Nevertheless, many reports have shown that neuronal defusing in the hippocampus and cerebral cortex increases activity during religious chants, prayers and other spiritual activities. Together, these studies suggest that the thoughts and feelings of religious practices with each other to activate unlike neuronal states throughout the brain to modulate religious conduct. Thus, an intrinsic religious substance of human consciousness appears to be observed across all faiths and religious traditions. Nevertheless it is like a mystery that how neurological developments dictate human mind, ultimately human behavior in religious beliefs and thoughts.

The integral relation between the religious and neurological effort of the human mind in all religious practices, neuro-theology specifies the usual thread of religious belief across all traditions and competence of human to participate in inter-religious dialogue, specifically all human beings have some essential desire of religious experience that provides a basis through that substantive dialogue on life's deepest questions occurs intuitively. Possibly within the biological, physical mind lies the capacity to understand the ultimate connects with true spiritual nature. It shouldn't be forgotten that in this the human beings are invariably exploring the physical demonstration of a transcendental experience.

Felix Wilfred, one of the leading theologians in dialogue among religions in India, interprets the need for social engagement in the path of inter-religious dialogue. He considers, "Pluralism has been the hallmark of Asian life and without it, Asia loses all hopes for its future."[43] Christians have the obligation to develop an outlook on the issue of pluralism, especially in the present times where there is a mass movement of people and culture across the globe. Pluralism admits the multi-religious approach which leads one to the ultimate reality. The ultimate end of religion is to achieve the Truth through the experiences of other traditions. Semitic Religions can implement their principles with each-other through the common good, thus the Semitic traditions focus on the divinity of man and the divinity in him. The divine nature is the same for all human beings and the dialogue elevates humanity toward the collective consciousness of divine nature.

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[43] Felix Wilfred, "Our Neighbours and Our Christian Mission: Deconstructing Mission without Destroying the Gospel", *The People of God Among All God's People*, (ed.) Philip L. Wickeri, Hong Kong: CCA, 2000, p. 97.

The dialogue and encounters among universal religions will bring religious harmony, peace and inspiration and mysterious understanding among them. Inter-religious dialogue would improve the oneness of humanity, faith in a religion that builds humanity. It gives many possibilities for encounter and subsequently the people are more open to the relation of other religions. Dialogue begins when people engage with each other and increase mutual understanding. Inter-religious dialogue is the medium of human-divine relationship. It contributes to happy living together as communion of saints.

Religious harmony is not a new concept; it was implemented during the Vedic period, each religious tradition has contributed an inspirational unique substance to the universe. Thus all the religious traditions are to be recognised and respected; no single tradition should assert that its tradition is the only way to liberation. The comprehensive way will yield democracy and freedom of adherence to the tradition one aims for. The purpose of dialogue should be to make a human being a better human being living in peace with others. The oneness is the "*Alpha and the Omega*", "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."[44] Thus the enlightenment of the Almighty to human beings and their spirituality can bring religious harmony, co-existence, peace and harmonious light to the universe. Vivekananda considered dogmas, rituals, religious practices as secondary factors and religion exists for unity. The true religion dwells in the identification of Divine potentiality in the universal soul of humankind. The oneness of existence directs human beings beyond substantial oneness of consciousness. Religion becomes spiritual when the adherences are compassionate, liberty and obligation the justice and equation, there appears spiritualism. When entire society is enjoying liberty then there is dynamic growth. This will be the true nature of human being, and their development and spiritualism for the 21st century. Today religion, global ethics and social justice is widely spoken of through inter-religious dialogue; the adherences need God who is beyond the religions and scientific progress but living amidst the poor.

In the scientific age the philosophers acknowledge the existence of God, who is the Ultimate creator of the universe and only He can bring harmony and universal peace. Today the scientists are attempting to reconcile the universe and philosophy with the scientific determinations. The inter-religious dialogue facilitates acceptance for tolerance and upgrades the constructive prototypes for universal social unity. From family, move

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[44] The Holy Bible: R.S.V., *Revelation 1:8,* (Bangalore: Collins Theological Publication in India, 1988), p. 227.

towards social incorporation and cosmic awareness; this is the aspiration of humanity that gives the concept of oneness of the universe and one family, the unity in diversity that is "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.*"

The majority of India still lives in rural areas, through education they could be uplifted, but it still remains a dream to be actualised. The contemporary society is fragmented with challenge; this is the cause for the impatience and disunity. Swami Vivekananda puts it compactly: "The aim of human development is the attainment of knowledge (*jnana*) rather than the gratification of senses"[45] There is urgent requirement for social revival of virtuous and spiritual values through the means of inter-religious dialogue and co-operation. This inter-relatedness between religions is the certain means for promoting universal spiritualism. The concordance among religions is an integrated wholeness embracing innumerable diversities of culture, creed, human experiences and ambitions. Thus it could be better to study inter-religious harmony and peace which will regenerate the philosophy of oneness. The cosmic oneness is socio-political and part of religious life, regardless of nationality, culture and tradition. The comparative analyses of religions serve as an impulsion to affect the unity amidst religious traditions; such integrity enables human beings to heighten the conviction on universal brotherhood. This is inter-religious as well as universal development towards justice and equality.

The 21st century is the age of information and technology, modern science is forcing the society to remodel old ideas and reform the society accordingly; the light of new knowledge has opened new ways of approaching the universal religion. The global community now has different religious beliefs informed by different scriptures and philosophical texts like the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the Bible, Quran and various Sacred Scriptures, and search mystical experience irrespective of social status. The globalization and scientific progresses turn people towards universal realities and recapture the whirlpool of consumerism, thus spirituality seems to be re-awakening. Religion should be people oriented, to be significant to the realization of the Ultimate reality. Hence the future of religion should be based on truth realization rather than dogma and doctrines, the *sadhana* should have a spiritual base for national and international community.

Religions should be the way to attain universal peace, harmony and co-expectance, the violence and conflict is not because of various religious beliefs, but due to religious

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[45] Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I,* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 2011), p. 1.

fundamentalism. Mutual respect and love for the others' religions, Religious freedom is the aim of inter-religious dialogue that sets to serve the human being; for such, new values should be introduced in our education system and the models of peace-building programmes should be introduced, thus justice and equality may be established. Where there is justice, there is peace and consciousness to love God and love the neighbour as yourself [46] means to love our neighbour first, as one should love himself.

> The world needs now, more than ever before, the integration of mind and hearts, in matters of religion and culture, as a solid foundation for the flowering of the rich faculties which men have been endowed with so as to attain peace and prosperity of an enduring nature.[47]

Along with the cultivation of values they should be enlightened to face universal challenges since they are the mandates of social change, and moulded that they could be accountable to forward the spiritual inheritance. There are ingredients involving inter-religious harmony and peace, and communal conflicts and versions among religions. Religious violence takes place when someone enforces one's faith on the other, thus violence arises and the deformation of harmony and peace takes place. This sort of clash is developing in spite of progress in science and technology. The significant factors resolving inter-religious peace and harmony has a special place in Indian religions and philosophy. In India, different religions have a harmonious co-existence for most of the times in history barring a few exceptions that was due to extrinsic factors. Hence India should be the leading state in spirituality and promotion of the religious traditions, tolerance and universal acknowledgment. Proper understanding of the Sacred Scriptures also contributes to the development of religious harmony in the universe. International peace building programs and conferences articulate the advance of religious harmony. For every religion there are prominent identities, like Swami Vivekananda, to illuminate others in inter-religious harmony. The unification conferences are the source of inspiration that promote inter-religious peace and harmony.

The purpose of religion is the recognition of oneness of humanity, and the ultimate message of all religions is oneness, through which comes universal co-operation, harmony and peace. The substantial feature of the Neo-Vedanta is the idealistic catholicity of *Vedanta* that is liberation of the self from all the bondages of selfishness, imperfectness

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[46] The Holy Bible R.S.V., *Matthew 22:39,* (Bangalore: Collins Theological Publication in India, 1988), p. 23.
[47] S.L.N.Simha, "Unity in Diversity", *Facets of Humanism*, B.V. Subbarayappa, (ed.), New Delhi, Affiliated East West Press Pvt. Ltd., 1995, p. 89.

and attachment to the worldly things, of complete freedom. Once there is harmony within the religions there is peace in the universe. Nevertheless inter-religious peace and harmony is yet in progress and in infancy, there is a long duration period for the total realization of ultimate reality. According to Swami Vivekananda the pluralistic concept of religion:

> The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the Spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.[48]

Harmony between religions signifies empathy, love, concern and togetherness, Love and forgiveness, healing the wounds of conflicts addressed by fundamentalism and fanaticism. Love and education breaks the limits of the monistic-cultures and opens the doors for multi-culturalism. Harmony and co-operation guides to democracy and nurtures tolerance, communality, dialogue and tolerance. Over all, it is love that binds the human beings of various religions and states and the basis for inter-religious harmony and peace, to adapt to sustainable new culture of peace, harmony and co-existence that desirables developing pluralistic society.

Ethics, Mysticism and Philosophy are common to the World Religions and it is also common to develop a philosophical theology and speculative justification of doctrines; nevertheless they fail to deal with the basic problems that the world religion is facing: a) The dialogues between them must take up on what they have in common, the ethical moral beliefs and principles that the world religions share; same was followed by Hans Kung in his *Global ethic*. b) The common experience of the uniting of the divine and human self, in the mysticism and the veneration of the divine which appears in nature. c) It is difficult to see what is common to the World religions in their metaphysical and speculative statement about God. d) The speculative philosophy of the religions. e) The world religions are commitments of religious belief. If the world religions are primarily communities of faith, not sociological communities or spheres of interest, the dialogue of the world religions must take place at the centre of their faith convictions about God, the origin of the world and the world religions was chosen because it leads to the core of the world, the human race, and the image of the human person.[49]

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[48] Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. I*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 2011), p. 24.

[49] Catherine Cornille, "Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue" *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-religious Dialogue*, (ed.), Catherin Cornille, (UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2013), pp. 28-30.

The great differences between the various religions are not found in ethics or in mysticism but in religious dogma and the application to ethics. All the religions share the simple moralities and ethical motive. For example: keep Lord's Day, Honour one's parents, should not kill, should not steal, should not commit adultery, should not bear false witness, should not covet your neighbour's wife, and should not covet your neighbour's goods.[50] All religions of the world must try to bring the religions closer to one another in their characteristic convictions and their speculative discourse about their convictions. Thus the world religions must start from the assumption that religion is a bridge to the infinite, no matter how roughly it might be built. We have to find out which bridge is strong enough and has the capacity to bear heavy load, has deeper studies and is well able initially to withhold judgment. There is also obligation not to see one's own religion as better than others.

A commitment to building a culture of peace and harmony may reduce corporate profit making in one direction, it can surely be turned to more positive directions. Peace building is the preventive of actions causing conflict, the disciplinal actions are taken accordingly, and any parties are welcome to demonstrate peace through democratic procedure and respect for universal human rights. Different practices forbid the eruption of conflicts and bloodshed; many religious traditions and cultures have their representatives in the inter-religious dialogue for peace, hence it is our obligation to expose the interests behind the arms, to establish the skills of atonement, peaceful co-operation and tolerance that implicate the involvement of all parties in any conflict. Pluralistic culture is not only desirable but also practical, the great complexity of corporative lives need for a more tolerant attitude. Representation of various religious members of various cultures will be facilitated, thus obligation to shared ethical values and principles.[51]

Just as our religious belief has a basis in our biological reality at the neural level, so also the global-ethical disposition rests on a more fundamental level of human existence that gave rise to "neuro-ethics" as a new discipline. As stated by William Safire, the neuro-ethics is the study of "ethical, legal and social questions that emerge when scientific discoveries about the brain led to medical practices, legal interpretations and health and

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[50] Holy Bible: RSV, Exodus 20:2-17, (Bangalore: Collins for Theological publication, 1988), pp. 64-65.
[51] Natale M. Samuel, Wilson B. John, Perry S. Linda, *The Moral Manager*, (New York: Global Publications, Binghamton University, 2002), p.122.

social policies."[52] Thus we come to acknowledge that 'ethics' has a neural basis, including the notion of global-ethics. In order to foster the culture of dialogue, we should pay attention to the linkage between religion and ethics through their neuronal basis. The ethical perspective is deeply rooted in the human biological reality that it becomes necessary for us to strive towards developing the ethical dimensions underpinning the religious attitude, which also is part of our reality. Thus, developments within the disciplines like neuro-theology and neuro-ethics attest to the promise of making inter-religious dialogue a reality in our times.

Dialogue is not possible merely in tolerance, but in recognition and mutual respect of the others in their distinctive individuality, but knowing others cultural setting is a necessity. Through realizing and acknowledging diversity on the traditional, cultural, social and religious stages reciprocation of values and a union in co-operation ultimately lead to the unity of humankind. Through the positive view of the universal humanity belongs the same universal brotherhood through the common origin and common destination that may lead to a greater universal obligation to practice through social activity. The universal peace and justice, the encouraging role of the leaders of the universal religions, traditions and cultural beliefs, is significant.

The doctrine of the world religions is in the culture which they have developed; on the base of the philosophical and moral concepts of their culture, that they have explained their faith in transient expressions and ceremonies proper to the culture to which they belong, no adherents of any religion should claim exclusive possession of the Truth nor supremacy over others. The substantial components of one's own faith should be delivered in a language that should be understood by the local congregation, thus the dialogue between the world religions should contribute for the better reciprocal knowledge and agreement, and an exchange of values and enrichment of their faith and the faith of the others. The purpose of instructing is to teach the doctrine of any religion that would take away the hostility of people to other faiths.

The truth and comprehensive approach to spirituality should be renewed and universally practiced to a better consciousness of the Divine presence. Contemplation is the essential access to the Divine that leads to the religious culture; it is accepted by all religions since

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[52] William Safire, "Visions for a new field of neuroethics", In: Marcus SJ. Editor, Neuroethics: Mapping the Field, (New York: The Dana Press; 2002), pp. 3-9.

silence is a part of all inter-faith dialogue. The persisting awareness of socio-political, economic and financial problems of the universe by people who are engaged in inter-faith dialogue is essential. Acknowledging these guidelines becomes a major steppingstone to a brotherhood in collaboration between the world religions transcending the doctrinal differences. Such dialogue would be the most effective contribution to effective successes to the universal troubles, and substantial stepping-stone to a better world for peaceable living and for universal justice.

With dialogue and mutual sharing of spiritual insights, our knowledge grows and may lead to common action which would involve joint efforts to deal with issues related to life together in society. May also include a devotional nature of people meeting to know each other's traditions; there are various religious communities which have national or regional organizations, frequently people with responsibility for inter-faith dialogue and co-operation come together. There are also bodies that have as their purpose the fostering of better relationships among different faith.

An ecumenical approach to dialogue admits to focusing on the things which are required in Christian teaching, whereas individual approaches have not discouraged local council of churches to address the dialogue, different denominations of the church representatives partake in the best way in the dialogue. Thus aware of other loyalties, which avoids impossible expectations that focus on central rather than peripheral issues, acknowledgement of one's own and others' loyalties is the mode to deeper sharing. Frequently stereotypes have been keeping apart from people of other faiths, we have to inculcate in ourselves that we want to learn and understand; this equaliser involves dialogue partners in the planning procedure itself.

 No dialogue will be successful without proper planning and discipline, thus it is significant to approach others with the same attitude, however they may appear otherwise to us, consider that all the religious traditions have adherents who renegade from the lofty ideals of their religion and embarrassing episodes in their history. Issues of separation should be dealt with as well as of unity; this should not be done with superiority or an effort to air grudges. The simplest instruction may well be that of St. Augustine, based on Jesus' twofold commandment, "Love God and do what you will."[53] Love; in the sense of

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[53] Prelicean Teodora, *Saint Augustin-The Apologist of Love*, (Romanio: University of Iasi, 2014), Online www.sciencedirect.com, p. 770.

mutuality, means that as we would share what is most precious and do as you please thus we invite others to contribute their treasures with them.

In spite of increasing the inter-religious dialogues, we see that religious tensions are increasing, thus what are our apprehensions of inter-religious dialogue and the limits? This requires rectification of the necessities and limitations of dialogues. It advocates caution on discourses about the issues of religious truth, reliability, pluralism, equitability of religions and so on. Inter-religious dialogue would perhaps have more success of resolving inner discord and contradictions of theological and dogmatic perspectives. It offers a resolution on the model of reciprocal enrichment; this methodology assures the promises of inter-religious dialogue.

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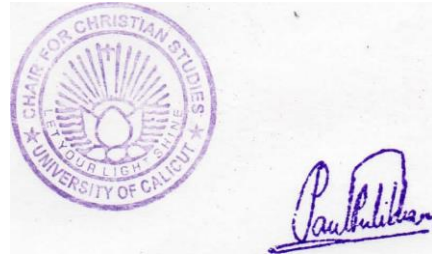
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Fostering Peace Amidst Multi-Religious Communities: Reflections on Inter-religious Dialogue

Jervasio Marceline Fernandes and Koshy Tharakan

Abstract: Cultural prejudices and religious biases have often come in the way of sustainable peace among Nations and communities. In the current milieu, the geopolitics that we witness often result in ethnic and National conflicts on the basis of religious identities. One of the most significant ways to address these conflicts to ensure peace in an ethical partnership is to foster a culture of dialogue amongst religions. In order to further the cause of interreligious dialogue, we may well look into possible metaphysical/theological commonalities across religions for a start by way of comparative theology. Nonetheless, Inter-religious dialogue needs to be taken to the socio-cultural dimensions of everyday life from the hallowed portals of theology or metaphysics in order to facilitate peace. Thus, a dialogue in terms of mutual appreciation of quotidian practices is very much desirable for bringing religious harmony and thereby sustainable peace.

Keywords: Inter-religious dialogue, peace, Comparative theology, ecumenism, religious conflict

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Fostering Peace Amidst Multi-Religious Communities: Reflections on Inter-religious Dialogue

Introduction

Cultural prejudices and religious biases have often come in the way of sustainable peace among Nations and communities. According to Scott Appleby, it is the same "religious dynamics" that prompts some believers to engage in violence while encourages others to seek justice by adopting nonviolent means and striving towards reconciliation.[54] Years ago, Swami Vivekananda pointed out that, on the one hand, religion has shown us the most sublime virtues and the intensest love towards humanity and, on the other, has subjected humans to the most diabolic hatred.[55] In the current milieu, the geopolitics that we witness often result in ethnic and National conflicts on the basis of religious identities.[56] One of the most significant ways to address these conflicts to ensure peace in an ethical partnership is to foster a culture of dialogue amongst religions.

In order to further the cause of interreligious dialogue, we may well look into possible metaphysical/theological commonalities across religions for a start. Though not virtually absent, the metaphysical or theological exchange has not been much between Indic and Semitic religions. One of the reasons could be that the Semitic religions are 'monotheistic' and Hinduism is 'polytheistic' while Buddhism in some sense is 'atheistic'. Thus, it is often claimed that comparison and contrast of religions may be made only about the socio-cultural realms and not in the theological or metaphysical domain. However, there are quite significant works along these lines giving us a rich repository of 'Comparative theology'. One only needs to look into the works of Indian Christian religious thinkers to appreciate the 'dialogue of theological exchange'. Such attempts enrich 'comparative

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[54] Scott R. Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, p. 19.

[55] Swami Vivekananda, "The Ideal of a Universal Religion" in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda II*, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama 1958, p. 375.

[56] See in this regard Merdjanova, Ina and Patrice Brodeur, *Religion as a Conversation Starter: Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans*, New York: Continuum, 2009 about the peacebuilding process in Southeast Europe in the aftermath of the religious strife due to the political developments there in the latter decades of the 20th Century. For an account of India during the Partition, see Aguilar, Mario I, *Interreligious Dialogue and the Partition of India*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publications, 2018.

theology', contributing towards inter-religious dialogue. Nonetheless, Inter-religious dialogue needs to be taken to the socio-cultural dimensions of everyday life from the hallowed portals of theology or metaphysics in order to facilitate peace. Thus, a dialogue in terms of mutual appreciation of quotidian practices is very much desirable for bringing religious harmony and thereby sustainable peace.

The dialogical rootedness of everyday life, in fact, is in accordance with the phenomenological traditions of philosophising. Thus, Aihiokhai points out that our everyday life is dialogical as we are thrown into a world of relationality as suggested by the philosophies of Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas. Thus, the impetus for dialogue originates from our relationality rather than our own self-reflections. As stressed by Levinas, the space of relationality would often subject to vulnerability. This vulnerability prompts us to let go of our biases and embrace openness to the other reciprocally, thereby facilitating dialogue.[57]

World-religions and the call for dialogue

In the latter half of the 20th Century, Inter-religious dialogue has been regarded as an essential and integral part of human society in the globalised world. This has led to the various interfaith commissions, international meetings, academic deliberations, humanitarian interventions and spiritual movements to create greater understanding and co-operation between people of different faiths. In the present decades, dialogues between Jews and Muslims, Christians and Muslims, Jews and Christians, Muslims and Hindus as well as Hindus and Christians are urgently needed to counter the tension and misunderstanding which has been created by the manifestation of various socio-political events that had brought religious conflicts to the centre jeopardising peace and sustainability. Pope Francis reminds us all of the significance of interreligious dialogue for peace in the following words:

> Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, so it is a duty for Christians and other religious communities. This dialogue is, in the first place, a conversation about human existence or simply, as the bishops of India have put it, a matter of "being open to them, sharing their joys and sorrows". In this way, we learn to accept others and their different ways of living, thinking and speaking. We can then join one another in taking up the duty of serving justice and

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[57] SimonMary Asese A. Aihiokhai, *Fostering Interreligious Encounters in Pluralist Societies: Hospitality and Friendship*, Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 53.

peace, which should become a fundamental principle of all our exchanges. A dialogue that seeks social peace and justice is in itself, beyond all merely practical considerations, an ethical commitment that brings about a new social situation.[58]

As seen from the above remarks of Pope Francis, dialogue is an 'ethical commitment' that seeks partnership with our fellow beings to build a society steeped in the pursuit of peace. Dialogue is living our faith in the presence of other faiths by reaching out to them in a spirit of tolerance and openness. Dialogues on different religions' theological or metaphysical content would go a long way in bringing religious harmony and peace. As noted by Catherine Cornille,

Dialogue is here thus understood as comparative theology in the broad sense of the term, as a constructive engagement between religious texts, teachings, and practices oriented toward the possibility of change and growth. To be sure, far from every dialogue between religions will actually yield religious fruit. However, it is the very possibility that one may learn from the other, which moves religious traditions from self-sufficiency to openness to the other.[59]

It was in acknowledgement of the above need to be open to other traditions that the first Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work was held in Stockholm on 19 August 1925. However, it was almost forty years later that Pope St John XXIII called all the Cardinals of the world to Rome and announced ". . .[T]hat he was calling a new Ecumenical Council (Vatican Second) to follow the signs of the time as he put it, to bring the Catholic Church up to date (aggiornamento) so it could engage in dialogue with the world".[60] Thus Vatican Council II came with a powerful proclamation on the relation of the Church to other faiths, with different documents for Ecumenism and inter-religious/interfaith dialogues. *Nostra Aetate,* on 28 October 1965 promulgated during the final session of the council was meant not only for the Catholic and Jewish community but was also about the relation between Catholics and the followers of other faiths. This declaration has proved a milestone in inter-religious dialogue. *Lumen Gentium* had given new ground in the history of the ecumenical councils of Catholic Christianity by its positive remarks about Judaism and Islam. *Nostra Aetate* further reflected on other

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[58] H.H. Pope Francis, "In His Own Words" in Harold Kasimow and Alan Race (eds.), *Pope Francis and Interreligious Dialogue: Religious Thinkers Engage with Recent Papal Initiatives*, Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 9.

[59] Catherine Cornille, "Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue" in Catherine Cornille (ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, p. 20.

[60] Leonard Swindler, "The History of Inter-Religious Dialogue" in Catherine Cornille (ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, p. 7.

religions, particularly Eastern Religions, by considering the riddles of the human condition to which different religions provide an answer. For the first time in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, an Ecumenical Council honoured the truth and holiness to be found in certain other religions, as the work of the living God. It expressed the human search for meaning with such clarity by pointing out that humans look to their different religions to answer the unsolved riddles of human existence. Archbishop Felix Machado sees the fruits of *Nostra Aetate* in the document *Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World* as a sign of maturity in receiving the teachings of the Second Vatican Council in highlighting the ecumenical relationships that are needed for any effective interreligious dialogue.[61]

The spirit of inter-religious dialogue is the belief that all human beings are the creation of God, and the Lord has fashioned each of the created beings with different talents and qualities. Thus all creation is precious to the Lord. The inter-religious encounter of 1893 at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago that was made memorable for India by the presence of Swami Vivekananada was one of the earliest instances of interreligious dialogue. On 13 October 2007, Islamic scholars and religious leaders from different parts of the world embraced the global inter-religious dialogue in a massive rally, with 138 Muslim scholars and religious leaders around the world having been assembled. They invited Christian leaders and scholars to join with them in dialogue. King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia met Pope Benedict XVI and launched a World conference and dialogue with all the religions of the world in Spain. He established the King Abdullah Centre for the study of Contemporary Islam and the dialogue of civilization within Imam University, Riyadh, in Saudi Arabia.[62]

The space for interreligious dialogical knowledge has increased in recent times. Interreligious experience that was once prevalent in the East is now part of the West too.[63] In dialogue, one learns not by being passively open or receptive but by thinking and

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[61] Archbishop Felix Machado, "Fifty Years of *Nostra Aetate*: Opportunities to Transcend Differences" in Vladimir Latinovic, Gerard Mannion and Jason Welle (eds.), *Catholicism Engaging Other Faiths: Vatican II and Its Impact,* Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 47-48.

[62] Leonard Swidler, "The History of Inter-Religious Dialogue", p. 9.

[63] V.F. Vineeth, "Interreligious Dialogue: Past and Present A Critical Appraisal", *Journal of Dharma* 19, no. 1 (1994) p. 36.

speaking. A partner in dialogue asks questions and stimulates the other partners to respond. In the process, one gives reality the specific categories and language in which to respond. The notion of rationality, which all expressions of reality are fundamentally related to, applies to the speakers and the listeners. It is while accepting this view of dialogical partnership that we move ahead in our ethical projects of promoting peace amidst various religious communities.[64] The significant meaning of dialogue is, "I can learn from you and others". Dialogue opens our senses to tell us the ultimate implication of life and how to live at peace with other religions in our times. In the name of religion, conflicts and wars have taken place all over the Universe. As pointed out by Koslowski, "behind the 'clash of civilization', there stands the 'clash of religions'".[65] The world religions have now accepted the challenge, and it is the responsibility of all the religious leaders to promote dialogue among the followers and resolve the conflicts between them to usher in peace.

Inter-religious dialogue and comparative theology

There are sufficient reasons to keep comparative theology and inter-religious dialogue closely connected, yet they could be very distinguishable. Comparative theology is a form of academic theological study and scholarly work, whereas inter-religious dialogue is generally conversational. Comparative theology is more than listening to others or attempting to justify their faith. They may study other traditions more seriously side by side with their own traditions, taking both the traditions to the heart and reintegrating the wisdom of the other into her/his own. This necessitates good scholarship of various religions and their metaphysical/theological perspectives. Thus the theologians have to understand and explain the beliefs of their traditions and ought to correct what they say about them. These all are studied in inter-religious dialogue. Inter-religious dialogue may take place as a skilled form of theological conversation on a much broader and less formal exchange; it is a general conversation, less intellectual, not that inter-religious dialogue can be exchanged for comparative theology though the conversation is better than solitary study.

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[64] Leonard Swidler, "The History of Inter-Religious Dialogue", p. 13.

[65] Peter Koslowski, "The Conflict of Religions and the Mission of a Philosophy of the World Religions" in Peter Koslowski (ed.), *The Concept of God, the Origin of the World, and the Image of the Human in the World Religions*, Dordrecht: Springer-Science+Business Media, 2001, p. 1.

For the educated people, theological dialogue is not to change their traditions and beliefs. Instead, they continue to represent their traditions. Nevertheless, comparative theological and inter-religious dialogue does more than listen to the other. They correspond with the demands of sound scholarship. Thus it is incomplete unless the theologians hear the other person, understand how they represent the religious beliefs of their particular traditions. These theological studies reflect on the old ways of believing, and a new perspective may emerge in an inter-religious dialogue. According to John Sheveland, comparative theology compares with polyphonic music. There are two characteristics of polyphony: identification of difference and intelligibility. Like dialogue, comparative theology acknowledges differences yet looks at others with hospitality and integrity and thus is similar to polyphony music.[66] Particularly in Asia, such comparative theology could stimulate the search for the common heritage of the community through dialogue. As Sheveland observes:

> The dialogue with other religious persons and communities, against the backdrop of which the Christian community in Asia is but a small minority with historical and ancestral roots in the majority populations, is a necessary step for Asian Christians to understand themselves and their neighbours integrally. Dialogue with the many cultures of Asia is an appropriate form of Christian witness, self-appropriation, and construction of meaning in a church which is polycentric and multicultural.[67]

Comparative theology is perceived as a mode of academic theology and a scholarly work. In contrast, one can have an inter-religious dialogue through learning other traditions and questioning other religions seriously. It gives external expression on actual learning. Learning is not significant, but success depends on the conversation. There are differences in comparative theology and inter-religious dialogue, yet they are seriously learning from each other. This learning occurs either through speech-communication or sharing the notes of scholars; in this context, comparative theology and inter-religious dialogue are not to be seen as alternatives to each other.[68] As we have mentioned earlier, the need to harmonise

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[66] Francis X. Clooney, "Comparative Theology and Inter-Religious Dialogue" in Catherine Cornille (ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, p. 53.

[67] John N. Sheveland, "Receptive Theological Learning in and from the Asian Bishops", *Asian Horizons* 10, no. 3 (2016) p. 557.

[68] Francis X. Clooney, "Comparative Theology and Inter-Religious Dialogue", pp. 54-55.

religions at a metaphysical or theological plane may be fulfilled by indulging in comparative theology.

However, inter-religious dialogue and comparative theology are not mutually exclusive or neatly separable. The study of another religion involves encounters and questioning of each other. To question one's own prejudices against other traditions and bring religious harmony, comparative theology is eminently suitable as it opens the vistas to theological doctrines of other religions. In the 17th century, James Garden, a pioneer in the subject, brought out the book *Comparative Theology* also titled as "the true and solid grounds of pure and peaceable Theology". In his theory, Garden explains two kinds of theologies: absolute and comparative. Absolute theology discusses the object of religious knowledge as revealed and instituted by God and has a basis in the Scripture. The second comparative theology is in terms of the significance and observance of a religious order, respect and relation of matters belonging to a religion, including rites. Garden's theological study identifies significant fundamental truths and values. Garden further tells us that the common truth and values could be shared with all human beings.[69] At the time, there were different opinions among Christians and across wider religious boundaries, and theology was construed as a discipline to identify and promote common ground.

Comparative theology could be supported and nourished by inter-religious dialogue since comparative theology presents a genuine and satisfactory way to realise and acknowledge the otherness of the religious standing of one's own identity. Comparative theology creates a balance between openness and loyalties; it sees inter-religious encounters as an ongoing conversation that can make authentic dialogue. It is dialogical as it sets out to understand other religions by researching in the light of the teachings of other religious traditions. Thus, it opens the doors for questions and their meaning in the life of the believers.[70] According to Stosch, the notion of 'truth' is an integral aspect of enquiry in comparative theology, unlike inter-religious dialogue.[71] In other words, inter-religious dialogue abstains from discussing the truth claims of different religions. However, in the present era, the

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[69] James Garden, *Comparative Theology*, Glasgow: R & A Foulis, 1752, pp. 5-6.

[70] Francis X. Clooney, "Comparative Theology and Inter-Religious Dialogue", pp. 55-56.

[71] Klaus von Stosch, "Comparative Theology and Comparative Religion" in Perry Schmidt-Leukel and Andreas Nehring (eds.), *Interreligious Comparisons in Religious Studies and Theology*, London: Bloomsbury, 2018, p. 166.

interplay of comparative theology and inter-religious dialogue is unavoidable, given the variety, dynamism, dispersion of knowledge and the frequent lack of responsibility to the self and the other.

Shared scriptural readings vibrate with comparative theology; here, the purpose is scriptural sharing and reading based on a theme. The traditions, culture and reasoning peculiar to each are shared. Comparative theology studies several texts of different religions at a time; it is an activity that could be reproduced and improved upon and tested with other texts because it is social in a limited sense that the expressions of different traditions may be heard together, where there is neither modification nor generalization based on the expectations of the other, no decided model in which its meaning could be predicted. These same virtues of both scriptural reasoning and comparative theology often apply in inter-religious dialogue as well, where changeability and resistance to expressed decisions raise the wished substitutes.

Often, the question comes as to whether comparative theology can alter the mindset of inter-religious dialogue. In the dialogue, we benefit that participants will be generally informed about their own tradition and culture, not about the other traditions at the table. If comparative theology has been experienced by those engaged in dialogue, they will know about the other traditions and assimilate learning and bring into dialogue their own traditions. Comparative theology may strengthen the persons who participate in inter-religious dialogue so that it is no longer superficial since the participants are learned not only in their own traditions but also in others. The dialogues are immediate and concretely developed for success. Comparative theology may decrease the importance of inter-religious dialogue by suggesting that dialogue is not to be the principal source of selective information about the other traditions. However, developmental scope of human knowledge is always considered, and dialogue is a means of gaining it. After comparative theology, one must learn to pursue the dialogue. The significance of philosophical approach to religious beliefs in the context of inter-religious dialogue comes into play at this level.

Philosophy and the inter-religious dialogue

The mediation of philosophy in dialogue arises from the fact that though comparative theology is well prepared to address the issue of 'truth' and 'rationality' of religious beliefs

it does not assume the role of a meta-level inquiry into religious convictions.[72] Philosophical discussions should be seen as meta-level communication for the inter-religious dialogue. It should promote deactivating religious conflicts and favouring inter-religious dialogue. Philosophy stands amongst the different religions exceedingly in affects since philosophy contains religious doctrines and philosophical critique of religions. Unlike scientism, it refuses to view religion as superstition. Ancient philosophy asked early Christianity to verify their fundamental belief in relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church. The Church verified this to the relationship to individual and political liberty. Also, Christianity used philosophy for a more profound influence of communication of the faith and its defence against people of other religious beliefs. Philosophy encourages conversation of the universal religious beliefs for the discussion of its foundational structure and its application. However, the Western philosophy, one particular philosophical tradition that has been generated historically, should not be made the standard of non-Christian religion. In contrast, philosophy should be understood in the universal sense of rational communication, based on the highest discourses of inter-religious dialogue.[73]

The knowledge and information one has of his or her own religion, and that of others is intellectually and philosophically insufficient; we need to attend to the teachings of other religions. As well-known, a language of 'contrast' often helps one to understand oneself better. Thus the most significant feature of dialogue is the eagerness to consider the incompleteness of one's own definition of truth and learn from the other. Dialogical intention can also be seen as a part of the paradigm shift that is taking place in our culture, as previous modes of knowing and communicating lack the requisite qualities or resources to respond to current realities. Many theoreticians have offered thoughtful guidelines for engaging with others in dialogue to recognise the inclination we all have toward a dogmatic understanding of our traditions.

According to Kant the critiquing of the reason is in a position to say precisely, as the self-critique, how far knowledge attempts the reality and how much reason can reason out the truth? When will it be true knowledge? The enlightenment's faith is in reason; here the

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[72] Klaus von Stosch, "Comparative Theology and Comparative Religion", p. 167.

[73] Peter Koslowski, "Philosophy as Mediator Between Religions" in Peter Koslowski (ed.), *Philosophy Bridging the World Religions,* London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1985, p. 1.

reason is significant for reality as a whole. Kant in his work *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* interprets 'rational faith' as 'reasonableness of religion' and not as 'rational principles and concepts'. Thus, for Kant 'faith' and 'reason' are consistent with each other. In fact, Kant reminds us that it is our duty to find meaning in the Scriptures in accordance with the teachings of reason.[74] However, reason is not the totality of reality as all reality is not rational. Thus, reason alone cannot decide the criteria of revelation.[75] The great and the major religions of the world chiefly are not based on reason and experience alone but on the apocalypse or revelation. The history of many religions shows us that religious doctrines have been revealed to them, and certain core aspects of many religions cannot be known outside the ambit of divine revelation. Thus, the divine-revelation narratives of the religions cannot be ignored by philosophy as fabrications; they should be temporarily and conditionally accepted by philosophy as objects of research and must be taken as what they claim to be God Himself revealed in the world. The critique of religion could not challenge the reality of this because the approval of this event ultimately is a matter of religious faith. Also, the role of philosophy is central in addressing the questions like who is a legitimate partner in the dialogue and what the goal of dialogue is.[76] However, philosophy cannot impose to religions what they must believe and exclude as irrational from their doctrinal systems of dogmatic belief or what ought to be the goals of a religion. Science and philosophy cannot be thought of as the substitute and termination of religions.[77] Instead, philosophy must recognise religion as an autonomous domain of knowledge and experience.

Another point of contact between philosophy and interreligious dialogue stems from an exploration of the nature of the relation between the 'Self' and the 'Other' in a Levinasian sense or that between 'I and Thou', as Buber emphasises. Thus, philosophy would clarify the nature and quality of the space 'in-between' the dialogical partners.[78] Since religious

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[74] Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, Tr. Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis, USA: Hackett Publishing, 2009, p. 98.

[75] Peter Koslowski, "Philosophy as Mediator Between Religions", pp. 3-4.

[76] Stanislaw Krajewski, "Towards the Philosophy of Interreligious Dialogue" in Lucia Faltin and Melanie J. Wright (eds.), *The Religious Roots of Contemporary European Identity*, New York: Continuum, 2007, p. 179.

[77] Peter Koslowski, "Philosophy as Mediator Between Religions", pp. 4-5.

[78] Oddbjorn Leirvik, "Philosophies of Interreligious Dialogue: Practice in Search of Theory", *Approaching Religion* 1 (2011) p. 18.

beliefs and the culture in which they are embedded have inalienable associations, a culture's expressions are shaped mainly by its religious beliefs. The pluralism of religious beliefs is related to pluralistic cultures. In other words, religious pluralism is a development of cultural pluralism.[79] Thus, the fact of the plurality of lived worlds and religions cannot be denied. Multiculturalism makes sense in many Nations as there are several different cultures peacefully co-existing rather than having one National culture. However, in and through recognising differences, one may simultaneously seek ways to reach an actual dialogue of religions. In this way, religious pluralism can be successful only if realised within the background of multiculturalism of religious beliefs, a crisscrossing of elements in religious beliefs *a la* Wittgenstein's notion of 'family resemblances'. From a phenomenological perspective, it may be argued that each culture is always plural in its constitution. However, this plurality does not necessarily end up in unmitigated relativism; multiculturalism undercuts such radical relativism as there are over-arching elements in a multicultural society. However, one need to be cautious here as sometimes, the commonalities of elements are interpreted in terms of the dominant culture in a multicultural society; this possibility makes it imperative for everyone in a multicultural society to be in a continuous dialogue.[80] Nonetheless, the dialogue in religious beliefs must be an inter-religious dialogue and not just a multi-religious discussion.[81] There are different concepts of philosophy such as rationality, faith, justice, and truth that are useful for the discussion of religious beliefs in order to promote the dialogue and discussion of world religions through philosophy.

Conclusion

As mentioned at the outset, religion in our times has become a potential source of conflict and violence despite its promise of peace, harmony and salvation. This is mainly due to a failure on our part to properly understand the religious doctrines, texts and practices of one's own as well as that of the others. Sometimes, the provocation for violence is due to proselytization that originates from a lack of understanding of the other belief systems. Inter-religious dialogue provides a forum to prevent proselytising though it does not curb

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[79] Koslowski, Peter, "Philosophy as Mediator Between Religions", p. 2.

[80] Koshy Tharakan, "Making Sense of "Other Culture": Phenomenological Critique of Cultural Relativism", *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research* 27, no. 4 (2010) p. 67.

[81] Peter Koslowski, "Philosophy as Mediator Between Religions", p. 6.

evangelism. Instead, it may be seen as an activity that complements evangelism. Inter-religious dialogue is related to evangelism in two ways: to understand the situation of non-believers and how the Scripture answers their needs and to respond to the questions raised by the people. This dimension of dialogue can be seen in *The Holy Bible* as one that involves them in a personal encounter with God. The Bible does not directly address inter-religious dialogue as it is understood and practised today. The Greek word *dialegomai* appears in Acts 17:17 and Jude 9 ask us to "discuss in argument or exhortation". Thus, the New Testament writers were using *dialegomai* to describe a period of questioning and seeking answers following the proclamation of the Gospel. The Bible gives several examples of affirmed religious conversations. For example, Child Jesus spent three days in the temple discussing with the teachers. "After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2: 46). Discussing religious issues with the religious leaders, all of them were amazed at his responses to their questions. Discussions with Jesus by the teachers could be considered as a model of inter-religious dialogue for the Church. An interrogative pedagogy was common among Jews and Greeks; the rabbinic method of teaching involved mutual questioning and discussion. Earlier, Socrates used the same method; today, it is called Socratic 'dialogue'. This mutual discussion is the essence of inter-religious dialogue. It also fulfils the process of answering questions that involve others in a personal encounter with God.

St Paul's discourse on Mars' hill in Athens demonstrates an occasion of getting together in inter-religious dialogue. The dialogical skill exhibited by Paul in striking a reconciliatory tone in his speech addressed to the Athenians is hard to miss.[82] Paul observed very closely and the practices of Athenians as the beginning for presenting his beliefs. Paul debated with the devout Jews; he beheld the practices of the people outside his religious community and investigated the religions of Athenians to identify their spiritual state and present the new religion accessible to them. Paul used the knowledge that he obtained through direct interaction with the professionals of the Athenian philosophies and religions. He shows that Christians can acknowledge the truth in other religions without accepting the entirety of that religion as true; acknowledging the limited truth which the Athenians held does not mean denying the supremacy of God's complete revelation in

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[82] J.M. English, "Elements of Persuasion in Paul's Address on Mars' Hill, at Athens", *The American Journal of Theology* 2.1 (1898) p. 107.

Christ. By clarifying other religions that result from inter-religious dialogue, evangelists can express their beliefs so that people of other religions and cultures will correctly understand them. Such an approach to one's own religion in the context of a multi-religious culture that encourages inter-religious dialogue is the requirement of our times to seek sustainable peace and harmony among people and nations.

Overzealous dogmatic believers of any religion refuse to acknowledge the Scriptural legitimacy of other religions and thereby succumb to religious fundamentalism. Scripture also has intolerant stances! Fundamentalists use such texts for religious supremacy over other traditions. Inter-religious dialogue in terms of comparative theology, to a large extent, can check this constricting view on other religions. At the same time, we may have to move beyond theology at times to the terrain of philosophy to clarify the very meaning of what it is to be human and the notion of existence in general. Philosophy also helps us to unravel the various dimensions of notions like truth, rationality and belief. However, a genuine understanding of "dialogue" prompts us to embrace the spirit of inter-religious dialogue beyond the realm of theology or philosophy and to acknowledge the very dialogical nature of our being in the world. Such a broader and deeper understanding of inter-religious dialogue would enable the comity of Nations and religions to work towards sustainable peace and harmony in an ethical way.

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