•CHAPTER IV

NATURE OF PLURALISM IN RELIGION
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As a matter of fact, the problem of plurality of religions is a natural Phenomenon to human society. We cannot deny the fact that many religious sects exist on account of plurality and multiplicity of thoughts. Diversity in religious practices is quite natural. One cannot expect uniform, stationary and stagnant condition in the sphere of religion. Although the ideal of one God and one religion may appear to be quite palatable and pleasant, at the same time realistic and dynamic approach in this context inspires us to opt for unity in diversity and not for the dull uniformity.¹

In this context we shall try to follow the views of Ramakrishna. He rightly said that 'Yato mat tato path'. That means there are many religions, so there are many ways to God. Vivekananda was influenced by the teachings of his master and he propagated the unique doctrine of universal religion. By the universal religion he did not want to establish a universal philosophy or mythology or ritualism, but he suggested to accept all religions as true. The message of harmony and reconciliations which Swamiji delivered to the lecture in the Parliament of Religion in Chicago was got from his master Sri Ramakrishna.

Someone has called Sri Ramakrishna 'A Federation of Religions'. Swamiji said that he is 'A Parliament of Religion'. Romain Rolland felt that he was a 'Symphony of India', meaning

¹ Professor Shail Kumari Singh’s article entitled ‘Prospective or the Problem of Plurality of Religions’ published in Understanding Philosophy: Eastern and Western perspectives, edited by Manjulika Ghosh, 2005, p 85
that he is the common chord of all religions. It seems that Sri Ramakrishna with both arms outstretched is saying to us: ‘I accept all of you, whatever path you may follow on your way to God, I reject no one’. He draws everyone to him in an embrace of pure love.2

Ramakrishna says that People have different tastes. Besides all have not the same fitness for spiritual life. Don’t you know what difference in taste is? Some enjoy fish curry, some, fried fish, some, pickled fish; and again, some, the rich dish of fish pilau. The Śivamahimnaḥ Stotra says,

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Ruchinām vaicitryādṛjukūṭilanāpathajusāṁ
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\[
Nrṇāmeko ganyastvamasi payasāmarṇava iva – 3
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‘People have different tastes, so they choose different paths. But all arrive at the same place – they reach God, the way all rivers reach one ocean’. There are various tastes, various languages, various beliefs, but there is one destination – God. Ramakrishna gave an example to understand the different paths of religions. The tank has several ghats. At one the Hindus draw water in pitchers, and call it jala; at another Musalmāns draw water in leather bottles and call it pāni; at the third Christians call it water. Can we imagine that the water is not jala, but only pāni or water?4

Religious plurality is a common fact to human society. In the strongest sense, religious pluralism holds that no single

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2 Swami Lokeswarananda, *The Way to God as Taught by Sri Ramakrishna*, 1992, p 357
3 *ibid.*, p 352
4 Swami Nikhilananda (translated), *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 1947, p 480
religion can claim absolute authority to teach absolute truth. Some thinkers have proposed that religious pluralism declares that all religions are true, though the nature of their realization of the truth of religion, as also the means of realization, may be different. But here also the bond of unity among followers is not organic and spontaneous, and is not adequate to resolve existing conflicts.⁵

It is true that every religion like Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism or Zoroastrianism preaches morality, good conduct, and honesty. No religion teaches that one should kill, cheat, tell lies. So every religion preaches some good for human society or human life.

According to Jhon B. Chethimattam, “In the past most religions were exclusivistic, each one claiming that it alone was true and all others wrong or only partially true. Religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, born under a dominating foreign culture, saw defense of a secret ideology and militant struggle to impose it on everyone, as necessary for survival. Other religions sought security in a certain indifference to others defending an inclusivism which stated that though other religions too had truths, all of them were included in one’s own faith.”⁶

Pluralism in religion indicates that there are so many religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity etc. But every kind of religions declares different qualities of religion. Islam for example, lays emphasis on universal brotherhood, Hinduism on

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⁵ Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, January 2007, p 4
spirituality, Christianity on self purification for reaching the God. Although every different religion talks of different aspects of the same Truth; that truth is God. Every religion consciously or unconsciously is struggling towards the realization of this unity or God.

Pluralism does not believe that all religions are equally true. Because they recognize that different religions makes certain claims that logically contradict each other.

According to Syādvāda of the Jainas all religions are only partially true and partially wrong, that is why, they have to complete each other and form a great religion. To speak the truth Europeans perhaps do not possess right knowledge of religions other than Christianity. The linguists began to study Sanskrit, Pali and other languages coming in contact with religious texts and ultimately gained some knowledge of other religions.

Chethimattam added this fact also that various religions had to adopt one or other of these philosophical traditions. Judaism, Christianity and Islam adopted Greek philosophy; Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism relied on the Indian philosophical tradition, while Confucianism, Taoism and Shintoism found help in the Chinese philosophy.8

The Vedāntic emphasis on religious consciousness gives an opportunity to study the so-called other religions not merely from the outside but as it were from the inside. Swami

7 Basant Kumar Lal, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, 1978, p 45
Ranganathananda says that the ancient Rg-Vedic pronouncement (1.164.46) remained as the unifying factor. But people forgot sometimes the Rg-Vedic Truth, and thought that these were all separate gods, exclusive of each other; this led to a certain amount of sectarian conflicts in the medieval period, in spite of great teachers and philosophers like Śaṅkarācārya re-emphasizing the Vedic messages of harmony and universality. That truth has been now once again experimented with, and proclaimed, today by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.⁹

According to Vivekananda multiplicity of religions is essential for spiritual growth of man. In this context he says, “The greater the number of sects, the more chances of people getting religion. In the hotel, where there are all sorts of food, everyone has a chance to get his appetite satisfied. So, I want sects to multiply in every country so that more people may have a chance to be spiritual.”¹⁰ Multiplicity of conceptualization for religious concepts is nevertheless latent in Swamiji’s writings. It is evident from his remarks like:

(i) “Though all religions are essentially the same, they must have the varieties of form produced by dissimilar circumstances among different nations.”¹¹

(ii) “All the different religions grew among different nations under varying circumstances and conditions.”¹²

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⁹ Swami Ranganathananda, Practical Vedanta and the Science of Values, 1995, p 23
¹⁰ C.W., II, 1976, p 374
¹¹ C.W., I, p 326
¹² ibid., p 321
(iii) "All religions mean so many attempts to grasp and realize the infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association."13

It is to be noted that 'universal religion' and 'religious pluralism' depend vitally on the distinction between the Ultimate Reality as it is in itself and as it is experienced by finite persons with their separate mentalities and cognitive apparatus shaped by different circumstances.

Swami Vivekananda can be said to be the chief spokesperson for the modern Hindu ideology. This ideology presented Hinduism not as a backward religion but at the forefront. It was this Hindu who saw his own pluralistic faith as a foreshadowing of the emerging World Religion.

To speak the truth that the Vivekananda world religion Centre in America Continues to present ideas of Pluralism to various religious groups. Though there is resistance from the evangelical lobbies of some of these religions, the astute lobbies within these religions are beginning to appreciate the ideas of religious pluralism. It has been ensured that the new syllabus for teaching world religions in the United Kingdom has incorporated the ideas of religious pluralism as an essential part of religious education.

The theological challenge on the issue of pluralism comes from the Abrahamic faiths in the guise of educating pluralism to relativism. We respond by saying pluralism is certainly not

13 ibid., p 332
relativism, or an attitude of "there is no absolute, hence anything goes." Pluralism merely asserts the contextual nature of religious expression. As everybody is different, the way he views and approaches God will necessarily be different and this is not a statement of compromise but a statement of fact. It cannot be otherwise.

Religious Pluralism does not signify that all religions are the same. Vivekananda never says that all religions are the same. He never makes this type of statement in any of his lectures. All religions are different, so it is necessary to invoke Pluralism. It is a matter of great regret, that the idea of invoking religious pluralism is vehemently resisted by a group of orthodox Hindu groups.

It is to be remembered that religious truths are not experimented by debates or discussions, neither are they proved by scriptural injunctions. They can be validated by virtue of personal experiences. Religious pluralism can be validated not by long winded discussions among scholars or believers of different faiths, but by dint of the validation of the claim by a person who can claim the same God experience applying different ways followed by various religions or by various movements within the same religion.

According to Swamiji, in enlightened religious understanding, there is no possibility of religious classes. It is only love that makes the whole universe as one's own home. Vivekananda wanted India to have an Islamic body and Vedāntic heart. He considered that this kind of compromise between
Hinduism and Islam the only permanent solution to the communal feelings in India. He wanted to create a new order of humanity which sincerely believed in God and the brotherhood of mankind.

In a letter to Mahammad Sarfaraz Hussain on June 10, 1898, Vivekananda wrote, "The truth of that Advaitism is the last word of religion and thought and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. I believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity." He wanted two religions to form a synthesis for the promotion of common good. In the same letter, Vivekananda wrote, "I am firmly persuaded that without the help of practical Islam, theories of Vedantism, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind. We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran yet this has to be done by harmonizing the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran." This expression also helps one understanding Vivekananda’s conception of universal religion. He wanted complete freedom for each individual to choose whatever religion he thought best.

Swami Vivekananda was totally against superstition. He declared that it was thousand times better to be an atheist than be superstitious. To him faith in supernaturalism was a sign of weakness. E. P. Chelishev shows that while struggling against colonialism, Vivekananda sought support in ancient tradition, particularly religious ideology. He interpreted Hinduism in such a way as to bring religion in defense of India’s interests, to unite the

14 C.W., VI, p 415
15 ibid., p 415
16 D. R Bali, Modern Indian Thought: Rammohan to Jayprakash Narayan, 1984, p 38
people to fight for independence.\textsuperscript{17} Swamiji declared, "Bigotry and superstition and idle ceremony,...have no place in 'the religions of India'."\textsuperscript{18}

Christopher Isherwood commented, "In India, therefore, Vedānta has endured through the ages as a non-dualistic philosophical structure sustaining and interrelating many cults of Gods and divine incarnations. Misunderstanding of this fact has led some western critics to assume that India is polytheistic. She is not. What is mistaken for poly-theism is the recognition that 'the Truth is one but sages call it by various names', and that different partial aspects of truth will appeal to various kinds of religious temperament. The alternatives this so-called "Polytheism" is the cruel and ugly sectarianism which claims a monopoly of truth for its own particular cult and is usually ready to persecute in order to enforce that monopoly. Such monopolistic cultism is emphatically rejected by Vedānta."\textsuperscript{19}

Ramakrishna practised all religions, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity. Even he followed the path of the different sects of Hinduism such as idol worship of Kali, Hanuman, Śiva, Rama, Kṛṣṇa and so on. Ramakrishna once said: "Wherever I look, I see men quarrelling in the name of religion....How ridiculous! The substance is One under different names and everyone is seeking the same substance. Only climate, temperament, and name create

\textsuperscript{17} Santwana Dasgupta, \textit{Social Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda}, 2005, p 362
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{C.W., III}, p 481
\textsuperscript{19} Christopher Isherwood, \textit{Vedanta for Modern Man}, introduction part, 1952, p x
differences. Let each man follow his own path.”

Swami Vivekananda said, “Every religion has a soul behind it, and that soul may differ from the soul of another religion; but are they contradictory? Do they contradict or supplement each other? – that is the question. I took up the question when I was quite a boy, and have been studying it all my life. Thinking that my conclusion may be of some help to you, I place it before you. I believe that they are not contradictory; they are supplementary. Each religion, as it were, takes up one part of the great universal truth, and spends its whole force in embodying and typifying that part of the great truth. It is, therefore, addition, not exclusion.……..Take four photographs of this church from different corners: how different they would look, and yet they would all represent this church. In the same way, we are all looking at truth from different standpoints, which vary according to our birth, education, surroundings, and so on.”

A question may be raised here, whether the pluralism of religions will not lead to conflict of religions. Shibjibon Bhattacharjee quotes, “Swamiji’s reply which is that plurality or diversity is a fact of life and there is no inherent opposition between differences in physique, in wealth, as also in religion.”

According to Swamiji, truth may be expressed in a hundred thousands ways and that each of these ways is true as far as it

20 Swami Nikhilananda (translated), The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, 1947, p 480
21 Roman Rolland, The Life of Ramakrishna, Third Edition, 1944, p 191
Everyone must learn that the same thing can be viewed from a hundred different standpoints. Yet the thing remains the same. 24

The celebrated linguist Max Mullar referred to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansha, who said, "As of the same gold various ornaments are made, having different forms and names, so our God is worshipped in different countries and ages, and has different forms and names. Though He may be worshipped variously, some lovingly call Him Father, others Mother, etc., yet it is one God that is being worshipped in all these various relations and modes." 25 Vivekananda also tells again and again that different kinds of religious paths lead to the same Supreme God who manifests in different images and idols.

Swami Lokeshwarananda comments, 'Religion is one, religions are many'. All religions lead to God. So in one sense, all religions are the same, but there are differences in the way we go to Him. So in another sense, the various religions are different. Because of these differences, there is a need for the many religions in the world. 26

Sri Aurobinda makes an important distinction between 'true religion' and 'religionism': "religion is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, it what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man, and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and law of the spirit. Religionism on the country entrenches itself in some narrow pietistic exaltation of the lower members or

24 C.W., II, p 383
25 Max Muller, Ramakrishna : His Life and Sayings, Advaita Ashram Almora, 1951, p 162
26 Swami Lokeshwarananda, The Way to God as Taught by Sri Ramkrishna, 1992, p 348
lays exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, form and ceremonies, on some fixed and rigid moral code, on some socio-political or religio-social system. ”

Swami Vivekananda is of the same opinion on the distinction between true religion and religionism. As a matter of fact, Religionism means religiosity or sentimental religion. The attachment of the religionist to a religion is too religious which brings conflict among all religion, religious sects and men. Religionism is so called dogmatic religion. Philosophically it may be explained as a dogmatic attitude towards religion. Religion is one that is service to humanity or love of human being and not only being only restricted to religious practices and rituals as prescribed by different religions of the world. This religionism seems to be akin to fundamentalism, a term used in politics.

Vivekananda teaches us the harmony of religions. Swami Ranganathananda says, the lessons of mildness, gentleness, forbearance, tolerance, toleration, sympathy, and brotherhood, everyone may learn, whether man, woman or child, learned or unlearned, without respect of race, caste or creed. ‘They call thee by various names: Thou are one’. 

Swamiji proclaimed the maxim – “Do not destroy”. According to him “Iconoclastic reformers do not 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

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27 Manjulika Ghosh (edited), Understanding Philosophy: Eastern and Western Perspectives, 2005, p 78
28 Swami Ranganathananda, Swami Vivekananda and Human Excellence (Harvard University Lecture), 2004, p 54
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 centre, where all the radii meet, all our differences will cease; but until we reach there, differences there must be.

A number of times Swamiji says every man that we shall have to manifest the divinity within either by work or worship or psychic control or philosophy —by one or more all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas or rituals or books or temples everything are secondary. It is not important that what is read or what dogmas are believed, but important thing is what is realized. All live and move in God. Vivekananda says, “Books never make religions but religions make books. We must not forget that. No book ever created God, but God inspired all the great books. And no book ever created a soul. We must never forget that the end of all religions is the realizing of God is the soul. That is the one universal religion. If there is one universal truth in all religions, I place it here – in realizing God. Ideals and methods may differ, but that is the central point. There may be a thousand different radii, but they all converge to one centre and that is the realization of God.”

Vedantā has given all that message of universal religion.

29 Swami Vivekananda, Jnana Yoga, 1970, p 381
30 C.W., I, pp 324-325
According to the ordinary man ‘Universal Religion’ brings forth a variety of images, namely, that of a bouquet in which edible matters of different varieties have been studded. In other words, by ‘Universal Religion’ is meant a synthesis of the best elements of the different religious systems. But Vivekananda suggested by the universal religion to accept all religions as true. Explaining the implications of this, Swami Vivekananda said, “I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian’s church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his Law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of every one.”

Thus the believer in universal religion has to be broad-minded and open-hearted, he would be prepared to learn from the scriptures of all religions.

By the term universal religion, Vivekananda does not mean a religion that will have one universal philosophy, or one universal mythology or one universal ritual. They all differ from sect to sect or even from individual to individual, and yet the universal religion is there.

According to Vivekananda the one watch-word for universal religion is acceptance. Acceptance is not just tolerance. He does not mean that we should only tolerate all religious sects. He always hated the word ‘Toleration’, because it is a negative attitude. Thus he said that not only tolerance but universal acceptance is essential for spiritual development of man. His

31 Amiya Kumar Mazumdar, Understanding Vivekananda, 1972, p 14
32 Swami Vivekananda, Jnana Yoga, p 365
acceptance of all religions as true may be seen in his following bold utterances: “Our watchword, then, will be acceptance, and not exclusion. Not only toleration, for so-called toleration is often blasphemy, and I do not believe in it. I believe in acceptance..... I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them, in what ever form they worship Him.”

According to Shibjibon Bhattacharjee, Swamiji holds that there can be only one religion. He uses the metaphor of different radii leading to the same centre. No two men can stand on the same point at the same time physically, so also spiritually different men will have different standpoints. Yet, although the starting points, the routes followed are different, the goal is the same. And at the centre, where all radii meet, all our differences will cease; but until we reach there differences there, must be. All these radii converge to the same centre. One, according to his nature, travels along one of these lines and another, along another; and if we all push forward along our own lines, we shall surely come to the centre.

While speaking of the essential unity of Religions, Gandhiji says, “I believe Hinduism to be a religion of truth.” But Islam and Christianity also are religions of truth. From our standpoint, Christianity is true, Hinduism is true from other standpoint.

33 ibid.
34 Shibjiban Bhattacharjee’s article entitled ‘Religion, Ontology and Understanding’ published in The Philosophy of SwamiVivekananda, edited by Pradip Sengupta, p 18
35 C. S. Sukla, Conversations of Gandhi, p 30
The essence of the Śāstras and the Vedas is that God is one without a second. This is the essence of the Quran and the Bible as well. Let no one say that there are three Gods in the Bible. There too God is one.\(^3^6\) Just as God is one though His names are different, Religion also is one in spite of its different names; because all the religions have been derived from God.\(^3^7\)

“It is because I am a Sanatani Hindu,” Gandhi said, “that I claim to be a Christian, a Buddhist and a Muslim. There are some Muslim friends who question my right to recite verses from the Quran. They seem to think that I am misleading people by reciting the Kalma. These friends do not know that religion transcends the bounds of language and script. I see no reason why I am not entitled to recite the Kalma and to consider the Prophet as a messenger of God.”\(^3^8\)

Swami Vivekananda holds the view, rightly in his Chicago address, “Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization, and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and

\(^{36}\) Prarthana Pravachan, I, p 20

\(^{37}\) \textit{ibid.}, p 21

\(^{38}\) R. N. Sharma, \textit{Contemporary Indian Philosophy}, 1996 ©, p 210
of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.”39

In the concluding part of this chapter a few lines from Swamiji’s Chicago address may be quoted, “I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.”

According to Vivekananda religions are not contradictory but supplementary to each other. Difference is the only in thought. So no religions should be neglected. Everythings that are apparently different, may be similar in a particular sense. Man and woman are different, but as human beings they are alike. As living beings men, animals and plants are all one. Thus the different religions talk of different aspects of the Truth, as aspects of the same Truth, they are all one. One must welcome all of the religions, because fundamental truth of all religions are same. According to Vivekananda “System after system arises, each one embodying a great idea and ideals must added to ideals. And this is the mark of humanity.” Variation is the sign of life and it is the plan of nature. Swamiji declares that if there should be a universal religion, it should be applicable to all places and all times, it should have followers of all paths to God alike, it should have scope to accept the future religions also. Moreover, it should

39 Swami Vivekananda, Chicago Address, 2004, p 21
40 ibid., pp 20-21
41 Swami Vivekananda, What Religion Is, p 18
be a religion with place for persecution or intolerance; it should recognize divinity in every man and woman and encourage them to manifest it.42

Ramakrishna says that the same Being whom the Vedāntists call Brahma, is called Ātman by the Yogis, and Bhagavan by the Bhakta. The same Brahma when he conducts worship is called the priest, but when employed in the kitchen is called cook. There is one God, but He has different aspects and called by different name.43

A truly religious man should think that other religions also are paths leading to truth. One should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions. One should remain always strong and steadfast in one’s own faith, and one should eschew all bigotry and intolerance.44 In the final session of the world’s Parliament of Religions dated 27th September, 1893, Swami Vivekananda boldly declares: “The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each much assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grown according to his own law of growth.”45

S. Radhakrishnan has rightly said, “who has seen the real is lifted above all narrowness, relativities, and contingencies. When we are anchored in spirit we are released, in the words of the Imitation, from a multitude of opinions. Authority is no longer

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43 Swami Nikhilananda (translated), The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, 1947, p 133
44 The message of Sri Ramakrishna, pp 6-9
45 Swami Vivekananda, Chicago Addresses, p 60
binding, and ritual is no longer a support. The name by which we call God and the rite by which we approach Him do not matter much. Karl Heim declares that for the mystic, ‘at the peak of ecstatic experience, all thoughts of the person of Jesus are lost and the soul sinks into the ocean of the divine unutterable’. The sense of the present reality of God and the joy of His indwelling make the mystic indifference to all questions of history. Toleration is the homage which the finite mind pays to the inexhaustibility of the infinite.”

He further says, “The pathways may twist and turn but when you reach the top you have the landscape which is common to all the mystics and seers from whatever direction they approach the quest. Whether your are a Hindu, a Muslim, or a Christian, your differences relate to the ways of approach or forms of address ..... but when you are able to reach your goal of completing yourself ..... from whatever religion you came, you feel that you belong to one common family.”

The following portion of Vivekananda’s lecture ‘The Way to the Realization of Universal Religion’ is very significant. He says, “The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran and all other sacred books are but so many pages, and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I would leave it open for all of them. We stand in the present, but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past; enjoy the light of the present, and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the

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46 S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, 1939, p 317
47 S. Radhakrishnan, *Our Heritage*, 1985, p 18
future. Salutation to all the prophets of the past, to all the great one of the present, and to all that are to come in the future.”

Every religion admits that supreme reality is achieved through the clear mind and or pure soul. In this context it may be firmly stated that “The secret of all the religions is that Reality can be apprehended through a clear mind of pure heart. ‘The intimations from the beyond’, reach those who posses a nirmala hṛdaya (pure heart). God does not love those who are clever, hypocritics and cunning. Tulsīdāsa declares that Rāma (Personified Reality) is reached by those who have a pure mind. He dislikes fraud, deception and flaw.”

No religion is ultimately true or perfect. All religions are different paths leading to the same reality. The aim and objectives of all the religions is to purify human mind so that God may come to him. If the followers of every religion take their religion in that sense, there will be no conflict among religions, religious sects, and men. This attitude towards religion will establish tolerance, mutual understanding, world fraternity, love, solidarity and finally world peace.

Swami Vivekananda rejected the claims to universality by those religions which were full of dogmas and doctrines, which were irrational, unscientific and useless. The aim of religious harmony is intended to unite human beings. Thus, it may be said

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49 Mahesh Sing’s article entitled ‘Religiosity of Religious Conversation’, published in Understanding Philosophy: Eastern and Western perspectives. edited by Manjulika Ghosh, p 331
that, universal religion does not destroy one's religion. It aims at giving man a lift from where he is.