Essay 8

The Concept And Role Of Tolerance In Indian Culture

Introduction

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

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

The analysis of the concept of tolerance is a philosophical task, but the description of the role of tolerance in Indian culture is a complex analytical-cum-historical task. If the skills of the philosopher be satisfactory, but the data supplied by the historian be incorrect or distorted, the philosopher's conclusions would go wrong. Again, the

purely historical question itself comprises two distinct questions which should not be confused with each other:

(a) what ideals, teachings or sentiments concerning tolerance exist in the culture, i.e. are found in the works of its philosophers, saints, poets, scriptures and folk-lore? And;

(b) what has been, the actual behavior of individuals or groups in that society, i.e. how far have the ideals been put into effect? Even highly educated persons frequently confuse the two questions with disastrous results.

THE MEANING OF "TOLERANCE"

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

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

The above sense of the word which is now the main or usual sense became prominent perhaps only in the 17/18th centuries when Western Europe first saw the dawn of the age of tolerance.[1] The original uses of the word referred to tolerance of metals, gold or silver coins, of bridges to bear stress, or the capacity of a person to bear pain and suffering, i.e. the quality of endurance or the ability to bear irritants or pressures, etc. These uses have all become the specialized meanings of the word. The Seminar's use of "tolerance" has now pushed aside other uses into the conceptual background, as it were.[2]

The diverse meanings or uses of the word in different contexts show the futility of trying to discover the meaning of a word with a

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

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

(a) Ram befriends or is willing to befriend those who differ from him, but are otherwise honest.

(b) Ram tries to understand the other's point of view with sympathy.

(c) Ram does not believe, unless there be clear evidence that those who differ from him are dishonest, or ill-motivated, or perverse.

(d) Ram realizes that beliefs, attitudes or approaches other than his own could possibly be right or justifiable.

(e) Ram realizes that while judgments of fact or of logic can be settled conclusively, judgments of value cannot be so settled, making disagreement almost unavoidable and understandable.

(f) Ram does not allow his differences with others to cloud his judgment concerning their good points, or to be vindictive or hostile to them in other matters or situations.

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

(a) Most Indians are tolerant persons in the above sense.

(b) All Indians, irrespective of caste, color, creed, or sex, have equal rights, duties and opportunities both in theory and in fact, though the ideal may not be perfectly realized due to human limitations.

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

Let us now attempt to supplement the above analysis with a phenomenological or conceptual analysis of "tolerance". Tolerance, as a basic attitude towards others or as a moral value, usually develops under the following conditions:

(a) awareness of plural truth-claims,

(b) experience of existential perplexity,

(c) spiritual autonomy or inner freedom,

(d) awareness of distinction between subjective and objective truth,

(e) awareness of man's historicity or cultural contingency,

(f) respect for other minds or persons,

(g) capacity for empathy.

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

Let us now distinguish the concept of tolerance from some other psychologically related or cognate concepts with which it is liable to be confused.

(1) A tolerant person may, but need not, be a skeptic or atheist. Indeed, tolerance is perfectly compatible with the most passionate and profound religious faith or commitment to basic values as also with skepticism.

(2) A tolerant person may, but need not, be indifferent to religion. Even if he is indifferent himself, a truly tolerant person would respect a person who is genuinely religious, and if the tolerant person be also brave enough, he would stand up for the rights of the religious person. "*I do not believe a word of what you say, but I shall give my life to defend*

your right to say so", admirably sums up the matter.

(3) A tolerant person may, but need not, be secular in the current sense of keeping the functions of the church and of the state apart. If a religious person upholds the organic unity of the church and of the state and if his religion does not demand any discrimination against other groups or within his own group, the practice of tolerance would be quite possible in consonance with his religion. Since, however, most religions do, in fact, have some in-built elements of inter-group or intra-group discrimination (in some form or other), tolerance cannot be put into practice without separating the church from the state and viewing religion as primarily a moral-spiritual experience rather than a set of political and socio-economic laws binding upon its followers. But secularism is neutral with regard to belief in God and the hereafter, and commitment to secularism does not imply or even suggest that the secular person is a theist, atheist, or agnostic, though it certainly does imply de-linking the respective spheres of religion and state.

(4) A tolerant person may, but need not, be apathetic towards persuading others to his own values or beliefs. Apathy is not any index of tolerance, but only unconcern for others. But the concern of a tolerant person for others is always tempered by sympathy and tender humility instead of being a conceited imposition of one's own values as the one and only truth.

(5) A tolerant person may, but need not always or habitually, practice a discreet silence in the face of conflicting truth-claims. Tolerance is not passive acquiescence to opposed views for fear of giving offence to others or the fear of communication. Tolerance is perfectly compatible with free communication and spontaneous self-expression in an atmosphere of mutual respect and good will. In the long run, communication helps to promote tolerance and greater harmony despite making un-bridged differences clearer or more articulate.

(6) A tolerant person may, but need not, be given to habitual appeasement of those who disagree with him. Tolerance is an intrinsic value like love or beauty, while appeasement is a strategy for avoiding

conflict and achieving success. It may lead a man to voluntary risks and sacrifice for impersonal ends, while appeasement implies expediency and following the least line of resistance. Indeed, a tolerant person may well be extremely firm and unbending in discharging his moral obligations and in resisting moral evil.[3]

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

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

CONCEPT OF TOLERANCE IN INDIAN CULTURE

To the best of my knowledge, there is no exact equivalent of the word "tolerance" in the Seminar's sense in Sanskrit. The word "*ksama*" which has been used in the Gita and other works means endurance, which was also the original sense of the English word. Likewise, the Sanskrit word "*sahana*" also means endurance or forbearance, while the derivative "*sahanashilata*" means the trait or character of endurance. The word "*ksama*" as used in modern Hindi means forgiveness. The

expression "*sarva-dharma-samana-bhava*" has been coined in some quarters for secularism in the highest sense. But, as we have seen, tolerance, in the Seminar's sense, is a wider concept than "equal respect for all religions", since tolerance applies to much that is not religion, say, art, literature, manners, morals, and taste, etc. or even opposed to religion, like Marxism, Freudian psycho-analysis, and nihilism, etc.

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

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

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

any penalty in any form? As we know, the Jains and Buddhists did deny the sanctity of the Vedas, and most probably no human bodies were put on stakes to save souls.

The concept of *anekanta-vada* and the twin concepts of *adhikara* and *ista-devata* or *ista-marga* thus jointly do the conceptual job of the word "tolerance" in the Seminar's sense. Whether this concept was translated into practice or not, and if so, to what degree and at what time and place, whether there were periods of tolerance followed by intolerance or a primitive intolerance gradually evolved into tolerance (as happened in Western Europe from the late 17th century onwards): all these questions are matters for historical enquiry. Thus initial intolerance by Aryan victors over non-Aryan or Dravidian people may have led later on to an extended period of cultural fusion resulting in classical Hinduism. The point is that the period of Indian pre-history is so long that a suspension of judgment becomes methodologically essential. However, the full implications of authentic scriptures, law books, literature, folklore, and reliable social-cultural records should be used to answer the historical question concerning the role of tolerance in Indian culture.[6]

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND THE CASTE SYSTEM

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

The struggle for political power leading to military conflicts is a universal feature of the human situation, and Indian society has been no exception. Rather the struggle for power was even more pervasive and incessant because of the ambition or aspiration of each and every

ruler to become the "*Chakravartin*" or the overlord, the king of kings ruling in their own smaller territories. And the whole of the Indian sub-continent from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari, and from Dwaraka in the west to Puri in the east was the *Chakravartin's* legitimate jurisdiction as the first step towards a universal commonwealth based on *dharma*. Wars and battles were, however, the sport and the business of kings and their warriors who won and lost without seriously affecting the lives and fortunes of the common man in the territory of the victor or of the loser in the tournament of kings. This was also more or less true in other parts of the world until medieval times, apart from the great risk of religious persecution of the subjects of the vanquished prince. In India, however, this sort of persecution hardly ever occurred.

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

After centuries of cross-fertilization of ideas and an extended dialogue between Indian classicism (represented by Vedanta) and the then modernism (represented chiefly by Buddhism), Hinduism (represented by the Gita) displaced Buddhism from the land of its birth. Meanwhile, Buddhism itself had undergone considerable inner transformation in the course of the extended peaceful dialogue. As we

all know, the presiding muse of this super-Marathon cultural dialogue was Sankaracharya who died in the 9ᵗʰ century.

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

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

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

Both actual social reality and plain scriptural texts make it evidently clear that the Hindu fourfold classification of men is not a psychological classification of personality types cutting across religion, race, and social status, but a classification based on heredity and the accident of birth. The duties corresponding to each caste (*varnadharma*) do not flow from the person's actual traits (*gunas*), but from his predetermined caste (*varna*). It is, therefore, misleading and futile to

try to assimilate the caste system to the concept of class or of social gradation, as it exists outside Indian society. It is equally misleading to hold the caste system as some sort of anticipation of the modern psychological theories of human types or to assimilate the concept of *varnadharma* to the ethical theory of self-realization or Bradley's concept of "my station in life and its duties." Indeed, the caste system is a unique style of social gradation without any strict parallel in the rest of the world.

Some modern Hindu thinkers and writers (including Radhakrishnan) are inclined to hold that the caste system was originally a function of the actual endowment or personality structure of a person who acquired the status of a *Brahman* or *Ksatriya* or lost it, instead of being born as such. This is certainly a logically possible situation. But it seems to me there is no evidence to support this historical claim, which, for all we know, might well have been the case. But even if we do accept this line of thinking, only a measure of occupational mobility was allowed to the upper or twice-born castes leaving the Sudras and the out-castes patiently to serve the higher castes as expiation for their sins (*karma*) in previous generations.[9]

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

creed, or sex.

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

CONCEPT AND ROLE OF TOLERANCE IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

To the best of my knowledge, the Arabic and Persian languages also do not have an equivalent word for tolerance in the Seminar's sense. The words; "*tahammul*", "*hilm*", "*burdbari*", "*bardasht*"; all mean endurance, steadfastness, or patience. However, the ideal of tolerance is certainly present in the *Quran* and also found in the conduct of the Prophet ﷺ and the pious Caliphs.[10] But some of the schools of Islamic law (*shariah*) have unfortunately developed on lines (allegedly based upon the *Quran* and the sayings or practice of the Prophet ﷺ) that certainly negate the concept of tolerance towards both Muslims and others. For instance, according to the classical or traditional Muslim view, a Muslim who repudiates Islam or commits apostasy (*irtidad*) attracts the death penalty. Again, if a Muslim does not repudiate Islam, but competent authorities deem his views or actions to amount to apostasy, the unfortunate Muslim may be held to be guilty of heresy and executed.[11] However, no school of Islamic law upholds the permissibility of coercing non-Muslims to accept Islam or to give up their faith, though inviting them to Islam is upheld as highly desirable for the Muslim. We must remember that the above views are not *Quranic* textual injunctions, but only interpretations or inferences (rightly or wrongly) drawn from the text.[12]

Some Muslim theologians or jurists have expressed the view that the *Quran* and the sayings of the Prophet prohibit Muslims from befriending and trusting non-believers. An under-current of suspicion and prejudice does exist in the popular Muslim consciousness side by side with the inspiring humanism and tolerance of the great *Sufi* saints and poets.[13] Many non-Muslims also honestly believe that the *Quran* actually does prohibit Muslims from trusting and befriending non-Muslims just as it prohibits inter-marriage or idol worship. It must, however, be noted that a careful and honest reading of all the relevant *Quranic* texts (as distinct from the gloss or interpretation) in the light of the situational context of the *Quranic* verses makes it clear beyond any doubt that the *Quran* is free from such repugnant intolerance and anti-humanism that some Muslim interpreters unfortunately have projected into the *Quranic* text or deemed to be the correct Islamic view.[14] In any case the Muslim political establishment in India, i.e. the kings or sultans unhesitatingly rejected such interpretations. And this holds good, not merely of such eminently liberal and humanistic kings or princes as Akbar, Tipu or Dara Shikoh, but also of Muslim rulers in general.[15] The very, very few exceptions only confirm the general rule. It was precisely the religious liberalism and practical secularism of the kings that led to repeated tensions or conflicts between the Muslim political and the religious establishments in India.[16]

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

The populace, Hindu and Muslim alike, deeply venerated the *Sufi* saints as the embodiment of religious piety, though the puritanical Muslim elements, especially among the urban middle classes, tended

to look up to the Muslim theologians and scholars who were apt to frown upon the predilection of the *Sufis* towards music, *yoga* and Vedanta, their tendency to practice different types of innovations and give esoteric interpretations of the *Quran* which clashed with the plain and simple puritanical approach of the theologians. Thus a measure of innocuous tension existed between *Sufis* and theologians.[18]

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

It is also deeply significant that the loyalty of subjects to their kings and princes cut across the distinction between Hindu and Muslim so long as the king could command military success by defeating his rivals. The warrior class helped and freely gave their lives for the king's cause, and their code of honor made them pledge their loyalty to the victor irrespective of his religion. Cases of revolt, rebellion, treachery, disloyalty, bribery, and corruption were human responses of the participants and not actions calculated to help the cause of Islam or Hinduism. This was secularism in action without bothering whether the state was secular or religious, or whether sovereignty rested in the people or in God.[20] This pragmatic secularism was rooted in the following social realities of the age:

(a) the voluntary extension of the concept of *ista-devata* to the followers of Islam,

(b) the voluntary extension of the *ksatriya-varna-dharma* to the Muslim warrior class and the princes, thereby viewing them as honorary or functional "Rajputs" and as an integral part of those who dwelt in India as their home (*Bharatavasis*), and

(c) the firm and unwavering principle and policy of the Muslim sovereigns (barring very few exceptions) to keep the church and the state separate and distinct in practice, even if not in theory, despite the pressure of the orthodox theologians and their lobby in the corridors of power or in the counsels of the king. With one or two exceptions, the Sultans in North India, in general, and particularly the Sultans in the South and the *Mughal* emperors succeeded in rising above the din and dust of communal or sectarian slogans. Perhaps the sound political instinct and practical wisdom of the ruling class enabled them to see that the talk of "Islam in danger" was an unconscious strategy for obtaining maximum material gains or defending existing vested interests which were perceived as threatened by rivals professing a different faith. [21]

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

The humanist message of Jainism and Buddhism thus came to life again in the framework of a simple, easily understandable, and emotionally moving theism, both Hindu and Muslim. The symbols of this movement are Kabir and Guru Nanak in North India and Ramanuja in the South, but there are numerous other great souls who inspired and elevated Indians of all castes and creeds, helping the common man in the villages and the cities to share the common joys and sorrows, and hopes and fears of life, the ceremonies of birth

and death, the festivities of the season, of marriage and of religious occasions, the pleasure of folksongs and the wisdom of folklore — all cutting across the distinction of Hindu and Muslim.[22]

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

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