

INDIAN HINDUISM: A STUDY ON ITS PHILOSOPHY AND PERSPECTIVE OF OTHER RELIGIONS.

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In its long history, Hinduism has never launched an apocalyptic war of religion or tried to impose one correct answer on all of life. Also, Proud is that India's pluralism is paradoxically sustained by the fact that the overwhelming majority of Indians are Hindus, because Hinduism has taught them to live amidst a variety of other identities. This paper is a study on vedic philosophy of Hinduism, Indian contribution to the world and also an analysis that nature and strength of the dialogic tradition in India is sometimes ignored because of the much championed belief that India is the land of religions, the country of uncritical faiths and unquestioned practices; may well be inspired by sympathy, but it can end up suppressing large parts of India's intellectual heritage. To understand its secular essence, this is a qualitative descriptive research on Indian Hinduism Philosophy and its understanding with others.

KEYWORDS: Buddhism, Hindutva, Hinduism, Indian, Philosophy, Religion,

In the era of globalisation guiding those who are ambiguous in between their respective faiths , and clashes of faith has become common issue in different parts of the world. As a result, the study of religious conflicts and its political transformation is also increasing. This is a political study on Indian Hinduism addresses a view of peaceful religious coexistence and social cohesion with other religion reflect from veda in Hinduism in India. Vivekananda's immortal “We believe not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true' is a prescription for peace and coexistence among competing dogmatism in a world full of too many dogmas”. Hinduism does not see the world in terms of absolutes. Blacks and whites are largely absent from its ethos. It sees competing notions of good and evil, duty and betrayal, everywhere, and seeks wisdom in finding the right approach suited for each specific circumstance. Yet, the tragedy for many Hindus is that they Hindutva Vadis, often ironically referred to by their critics as bhakts (the 'devout'), are betraying daily the values of the very faith to which they claim to be committed. Since the original Bhakti movement¹ began in Tamil Nadu in the sixth century, Hindu thought has stressed the personal nature of religion and emphasised the inclusive philosophy and all-embracing syncretism of the faith that Adi Shankara and Vivekananda taught to the world as Hinduism. “The traditional Hindu texts, starting with the Vedas, were imbued with a sense of philosophical wonder, raising questions about creation, the nature of being and the meaning of life, and treating nothing as too sacred to interrogate”. (Shashi Tharoor, Why I Am Hindu)²

Moreover, Hinduism attaches importance to pramana (instruments of warranted inference) in the pursuit of jnana, or knowledge. As long as one can demonstrate the validity or rigour of one pramana, one is entitled to the specific belief structure one wish to adhere to. It is this feature, unlike

¹ The Bhakti movement refers to the theistic devotional trend that emerged in medieval Hinduism

² Tharoor Shashi, (2018). “Why I am Hindu”

other traditions that rely on revelation as claims to truth, that ensures Hinduism is more open to diversity of belief. A superficial view of Hinduism sees its other-worldly 'timelessness' But in fact the religion is anchored not in a world-denying spirituality, as Raimon Panikkar points out; in his words, "it is not the timeless, but the time-full", which wins Vedic approbation. Time is depicted in hymns in the Atharva Veda as perpetually replenishing itself from a full vessel which, in spite of all efforts, can never be emptied. Since time transcends time, it is without beginning or end, without limit; and in that sense it is like God. Time am I, world-destroying,' says Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, stressing I am imperishable Time". (Verse in Maitrya Upnashid) From time all beings emerge From time they advance and grow In time, too, they come to rest.

Also, Dr. Karan Singh, the former maharaja of Kashmir and Indian politician who is also a superbly readable scholar of Hindu philosophy, identifies five major principles in Hinduism that lend relevance and validity to the faith in today's world. "At the risk of an inadequate paraphrase, these are, according to him: the recognition of the unity of all mankind, epitomised in the Rig Vedic phrase *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, the world is one family; the harmony of all religions, epitomized in that Rig Vedic statement that was Swami Vivekananda's favourite, '*ekam sat, vipra bahuda vadanti*'³; the divinity inherent in each individual, transcending the social stratification and hierarchies that have all too often distorted this principle in Hindu society; the creative synthesis of practical action and contemplative knowledge, science and religion, meditation and social service, in the faith; and finally, the cosmic vision of Hindu philosophy, incorporating the infinite galaxies of which the Earth is just a tiny speck. In Dr Singh's own words: 'such is the grandeur and mystery of the Atman that it can move towards a comprehension of the unutterable mystery of existence. We, who are children of the past and the future, of earth and heaven, of light and darkness, of the human and the divine, at once evanescent and eternal, of the world and beyond it, within time and in eternity, yet have the capacity to comprehend our condition, to rise above our terrestrial limitations, and finally, to transcend the throbbing abyss of space and time itself'. This, Dr Singh says, is the message of Hinduism, and it is a message that can and should resonate throughout the world. (Dr Karan Singh) On coexistence, Kshiti Mohan Sen⁴ also discusses the interrelations in greater detail in his Bengali book *Bharate Hindu Mushalmaner Jukto Sadhana* parts of contemporary Hindu literature. Further more, religious poets like Kabir or Dadu were born Muslim but transcended sectional boundaries (one of Kabir's verses declares: 'Kabir⁵ is the child of and of Ram: He is my Guru, He is my Pir). (Harmonds worth: Penguin Books, 1961. 2005) . He Says that they were strongly affected by Hindu devotional poetry and, in turn, profoundly influenced it. There is, in fact, no communal line to be drawn through Indian literature and arts, setting Hindus and Muslims on separate slides. Another serious problem with the narrow reading of 'Indian culture as Hindu culture is the entailed neglect of many major achievements of Indian civilization that have nothing much to do with religious thinking at all. The focus on the distinctly Hindu religious tradition effectively leaves out of the accounting rationalist and non-religious pursuits in India. Whereas, Subsequently, It was Europe where the religious confrontations and chaos were on its culmination not India. India produced a number of

³ "Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti" is a Sutra quote from of all the over one hundred Upnishads. This aphorism means: "That which exists is ONE sages call it by various names."

⁴ Sen, Mohan, Kshishti. (1961, 2005) "Hinduism". Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

⁵ Kabir was a 15th-century Indian mystic poet and saint, whose writings, according to some scholars, influenced Hinduism's Bhakti movement.

religions--Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism-- it was Europe, not India, which consistently made religion grounds for war and the state an instrument of persecution". JUNGHARE, Indira Y. ABD/USA/CIIIA. Even the concept of Nationalism was also arrived relatively recently with the origin of "nation-states" in 17th-18th century Europe. From economics to philosophy, the theories of "survival of the fittest" and the "zero-sum game" reigned supreme. And as history has shown, this form of exclusionary nationalism not only lead to two World Wars but also directly or indirectly promoted the colonisation of Asia and Africa. Apart all the goals in Hinduism is part pragmatic and worldly, dealing with the empirical world of experiences and its sorrowful rendering, and part metaphysical and speculative. The idea of oneness amongst people of all races, caste, creeds, geographies and gender is fundamental to the interpretation of integral frameworks in the international context. Perfectly compliant with the modern notions of democracy and the UN, the integral doctrine is perhaps the oldest framework for human rights. It accords equal rights to all by virtue of the intrinsic unity in life forms. (Ananya Awasti, Indian Express)

Tracing the origin of 'Fundamental Unity' to the Upanishadic traditions, Advaita (non-dual) Vedanta is an outlook towards life which believes in the "non-dualism" of Atman (soul) and Brahman (universal metaphysical reality), while acknowledging the Prakriti (material world) as an ever-changing context. It does not recognise any differences between the nature of life - whether of human, animal or plant origin and acknowledges it as being part of a larger cosmic consciousness. We live and acting upon the fundamental unity of human kind-in outlook which offers powerful solutions for political, social and economic cooperation across the world. The study of Hinduism philosophy is important historically, philosophically, and even politically. In S. Radhakrishnan's (1957: XXX) words, "India's concentrated study of the inner nature of man is, in the end, a study of man universal." The philosophy of Hinduism is both religious and secular, deal with the study of human in relation to the universe that is marked by diversity of being (ontological level), becoming and behaving (pragmatic level). India has contributed to world civilisation in numerous ways. Vedas,⁶ Upanishads⁷, the epics Mahabharata⁸, Ramayana⁹, the story-literature, the Hindu Panchatantra¹⁰ and the Buddhist Jatakas¹¹, (which have been transferred to Aesop tales) represent India's rich tradition and philosophies. In the fields of philosophy of Indian Hinduism, India's contributions to the world are truly unmatched. The goals in Hinduism is part pragmatic and worldly, dealing with the empirical world of experiences and its sorrowful rendering, and part metaphysical and speculative. In India, If we briefly analyze the philosophy of Buddhism, Jainism, the Upanishadic/ Vedantic non-dualism, Samkya-Yoga's dualism, Nyaya-Vaishesika's pluralism, and Carvaka's materialism. Radhakrishnan, S. (1927) "The Hindu view of life". repr. 1962.

⁶ The Vedas are a large body of religious texts originating in ancient India. Composed in Vedic Sanskrit and also the oldest scriptures of Hinduism.

⁷ The Upanishads are a collection of texts of religious and philosophical nature, written in India probably between c. 800 BCE and c. 500 BCE, during a time when Indian society started to question the traditional Vedic religious order.

⁸ The Mahābhārata is one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India.

⁹ Ramayana is one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India.

¹⁰ The Panchatantra is an ancient Indian collection of interrelated animal fables in Sanskrit verse and prose, arranged within a frame story

¹¹ The Jātaka tales are a voluminous body of literature native to India concerning the previous births of Gautama Buddha in both human and animal form.

PERSPECTIVE OF OFF SHOOTS OF HINDUISM AND OTHER RELIGIONS:

Buddhism and Jainism also do not reject the Vedas, but merely their absolute authority as shown below. Buddhism does not deny that the Vedas in their true origin were sacred but it holds that they have been amended repeatedly by certain Brahmins to secure their positions in society. The Buddha declared that the Veda in its true form was declared by Kashyapa to certain rishis, who by severe penances had acquired the power to see by divine eyes. In the Buddhist Vinaya Pitaka¹² of the Mahāvagga¹³ section the Buddha names these rishis, and declared the Vedic rishis "Atthako, Vâmako, Vâmadevo, Vessâmitto, Yamataggi, Angiraso, Bhâradvâjo, Vâsettho, Kassapo, and Bhagu" but that it was altered by a few Brahmins who introduced animal sacrifices. The Vinaya Pitaka's section Anguttara Nikaya: Panchaka Nipata says that it was on this alteration of the true Veda that the Buddha refused to pay respect to the Vedas of his time. The Buddha was declared to have been born a Brahmin trained in the Vedas and its philosophies in a number of his previous lives according to Buddhist scriptures. Other Buddhas too were said to have been born as Brahmins that were trained in the Vedas. The Mahasupina Jataka¹⁴ and Lohakumbhi Jataka¹⁵ declare that Sariputra in a previous life was a Brahmin Sruta (sacrificial priest) that prevented animal sacrifice by declaring that animal sacrifice was actually against the Vedas. Further, the Suttanipata 1000 declares that mahapurusha lakshana (auspicious symbols of the Buddha) that Buddhism uses, are declared in the Vedic mantras. Brahmayu was a well-versed Vedic follower of the Buddha who by reading the four Vedas saw that the Buddha was auspicious as per his 32 symbols.

Indeed, even in terms of Vedic and Upanishadic contributions, Buddhism and Jainism are as much the inheritors of that tradition as are later forms of Hinduism. The one university for which India was outstandingly famous, namely Nālandā, which attracted scholars from China and elsewhere, and which came to an end after many hundred years of existence just around the time when the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were being founded (in the thirteenth Century), happened to be a Buddhist university.

The spread of Buddhism from India to nearly half the world is one of the great e major schools of Hindu belief. The history of that tradition goes back at least two millennia and a half, to the sixth century BCE, when the Lokayata and Carvaka schools¹⁶ had their origin, in a climate of heterodoxy in which Buddhism and Jainism were also born. Something similar can be said about alleged cultural attitudes of the Hindus. I do not doubt that some Hindus do indeed find, as reported recently in the newspapers, that even Valentine's Day cards are offensive as being allegedly sexually explicit - a point made with much force by some political activist Hindus. But Hindus vary in their attitude to issues of this kind, as the sculptors of the temples in Khajuraho could readily explain. I take the liberty of speculating that the greatest Sanskrit poet, Kālidāsa, with his eloquence on the beauty of

¹² The Vinaya Piṭaka is a Buddhist scripture one of the three parts that make up the Tripiṭaka

¹³ Mahāvagga: includes accounts of Gautama Buddha's and the ten principal disciples' awakenings, as well as rules for uposatha days and monastic ordination.

¹⁴ In Buddhist literature, the sixteen frightening dreams of King Pasenadi (Sanskrit; Pali Mahāsūpina Jātaka) is notable topic of Buddhism and dreamt by the King Pasenadi of Kosala and their Interpretations by the Gautama Buddha.

¹⁵ Lohakumbhi Jataka means something in Buddhism, Pali.

¹⁶ Charvaka, originally known as Lokāyata and Bārhaspatya, is an ancient school of Indian materialist.

female forms bathing in the river Sipra in his native Ujjayini¹⁷, would have found Valentine's Day cards to be deeply disappointing. The term Hindu can be sensibly used in either of two alternative forms, reflecting respectively membership of a community, or the holding of particular religious views and cultural attitudes, but the numerical force of the Hindus that is marshalled in favour of censorial uses is obtained through a conceptual confounding of two distinct notions.

To conclude, the inclusionary view of Indian identity, which we have inherited and which I have tried to defend, is not only not parasitic on, or partial to, a Hindu identity, it can hardly be a federation of the different religious communities in India: Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jain, Parsee and others. Indian identity need not be mediated through other group identities in a federal way. Indeed, India is not, in this view, sensibly seen even as a federal combination of different communities.

Further, In Mughal reign, Akbar, the Mughal emperor of India, was also engaged in just such a far-reaching scrutiny. He paid particular attention to relations among religious communities and to the need for peaceful coexistence in the already multicultural India. Taking note of the denominational diversity of Indians (including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jains, Sikhs, Parsees, Jews and others), he laid the foundations of the secularism and religious neutrality of the state which he insisted must ensure that 'no man should be interfered with on account of religion, and anyone is to be allowed to go over to a religion that pleases him'. Akbar's thesis that 'the pursuit of reason' rather than 'reliance on tradition' is the way to address difficult social problems is a view that has become all the more important for the world today. It is striking how little critical assessment of the experience of the millennium took place during its recent worldwide celebration. (Jonathan Glover)¹⁸

It is worth recalling that in Akbar's pronouncements of four hundred Years ago on the need for religious neutrality on the part of the state, we can identify the foundations of a non-denominational, secular state which was yet to be born in India or for that matter anywhere else. Thus, Akbar's reasoned conclusion, codified during 1591 and 1592, had universal implications. Europe had just as much reason to listen to that message as India had. The Inquisition was still in force, and just when Akbar was writing on religious tolerance in Agra in 1592, Giordano Bruno was arrested for heresy, and ultimately, in

1600, burnt at the stake in the Campo dei Fiori in Rome. For India in particular, the tradition of secularism can be traced to the trend of tolerant and pluralist thinking that had begun to take root well before Akbar, for example, in the writings of Amir Khusrau¹⁹ in the fourteenth century as well as in the non-sectarian devotional poetry of Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya and others. But that tradition got its firmest official backing from Emperor Akbar himself. He also practised as he preached abolishing discriminatory taxes imposed earlier on non-Muslims, inviting many Hindu intellectuals and artists into his court (including the great musician Tansen), and even trusting a Hindu general, Man Singh, to command the armed force.

In some ways, Akbar was precisely codifying and consolidating need for religious neutrality of the state that had been enunciate general form, nearly two millennia before him by the Indian emperor Ashoka, whose ideas I have referred to earlier. While Ashoka ruled a long time ago, in the case of

¹⁷ Ujjain is an ancient city beside the Kshipra River in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

¹⁸ Glover, Jonathan. *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*

¹⁹ Amīr Khusro Dehlaṃī, was a Sufi musician, poet and scholar from India.

Akbar there is a continuity of legal scholarship and public memory linking his ideas and codifications with present-day India. “Indian secularism, which was strongly championed in the twentieth century by Gandhi, Nehru, Tagore and others, is often taken to be something of a reflection of Western ideas (despite the fact that Britain is a somewhat unlikely choice as a spearhead of secularism). In contrast, there are good reasons to link this aspect of modern India, including its constitutional secularism and judicially guaranteed multiculturalism (in contrast with, say, the privileged status of Islam in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan), to earlier Indian writings and particularly to the ideas of this Muslim emperor of four hundred years ago”. (Irfan Habib)²⁰

Perhaps the most important point that Akbar made in his defence of a tolerant multiculturalism concerns the role of reasoning. Reason had to be supreme, since even in disputing the validity of reason we have to give reasons. Attacked by traditionalists who argued in favour of instinctive faith in the Islamic tradition, Akbar told his friend and trusted lieutenant Abul Fazl (a formidable scholar in Sanskrit as well as others.

Convinced that he had to take a serious interest in the religions and cultures of non-Muslims in India, Akbar arranged for discussion to take place involving not only mainstream Hindu and Muslim philosophers (Shia and Sunni²¹ as well as Sufi), but also involving Christians, Jews, Parsis, Jains and, according to Abul Fazl²², even the followers of Cārvaka one of the Indian schools of atheist thinking the roots of which can be traced to around the sixth century BCE.²² Instead of taking an all-or-nothing view of a faith, Ashoka liked to reason about particular components of each multifaceted religion. For example, arguing with Jains, Akbar would remain sceptical of their rituals, and yet become convinced by their argument for vegetarianism and end up deploring the eating of all flesh. All this caused irritation among those who preferred to base religious belief on faith rather than reasoning. “There were several revolt against Akbar by orthodox Muslims, on one occasion joined by his eldest son, Prince Salim, with whom he later reconciled. But he stuck to what he called 'the path of reason' (rahi aql), and insisted on the need for open dialogue and free choice. At one stage, Akbar even tried, not very successfully, to launch a new religion, Din-i-ilahi (God's religion), combining what he took to be the good qualities of different faiths. When he died in 1605, the Islamic theologian Abdul Haq concluded with some satisfaction that, despite his 'innovations', Akbar had remained a good Muslim. This was indeed so, but Akbar would have also added that his religious beliefs came from his own reason and choice, not from 'blind faith', or from the marshy land of tradition”. (M. Athar Ali, ‘The Perception of India in Akbar and Abul Fazal’, in Habib, Akbar and his India)

²⁰ This volume focuses on Akbar, his empire and environment, to present a picture of the polity and culture of India 400-500 years ago.

²¹ Shia and Sunni Islam are the two major denominations of Islam.

²² Abu'l-Fazl, was the Grand vizier of the Mughal emperor Akbar, and author of the Akbarnama, the official history of Akbar's reign in three volumes, and a Persian translation of the Bible.

CONCLUSION:

Hinduism is not an absolute belief system; it offers a way of coping with the complexity of the world. It acknowledges that the truth is eclectic and plural, that there is no one correct answers to the vast questions of creation, or of the meaning of existence. In its reverence for sages and rishis, it admits that knowledge may come from an exchange between two or more views, neither of which necessarily possesses a monopoly on the truth. The greatest truth, to the Hindu, is that which accepts the existence of other truths. Hinduism sees life as an evolving dynamic, not a contest that can ever be settled once and for all. The art of coexistence that we have practiced for so many years to find centre stage again, to be efficient to sort out differences in a manner where we do not have to resort to violence. India's greatest strength is her diversity, her composite culture, her faith on pluralism and secularism, but as we all know in present politics these very high valued principles are being attacked. As a Hinduism believer, one cannot agree with the contemporary hindutva politics and radical Hindutva Vadis.

Hinduism, with its openness, its respect for variety, its acceptance of all other faiths, is one religion which has always been able to assert itself without threatening others. But this is not the Hindutva that destroyed the Babri Masjid, nor that spewed in hate-filled diatribes by communal politicians. It can't be proud of Hindu vegetarians who have roasted human beings alive and rejoiced over the corpses. It can't be proud of those who reduce the lofty metaphysical speculations of the Upanishads to the petty bigotry of their own sense of identity, which they assert in order to exclude, not embrace, others. Proud is that India's pluralism is paradoxically sustained by the fact that the overwhelming majority of Indians are Hindus, because Hinduism has taught them to live amidst a variety of other identities. The Shankaracharya of Kanchi, is proud who say that Hindus and Muslims must live like Ram and Lakshman in India. Not of those Hindus, like Sadhvi' Ritambhara²³, who say that Muslims are like sour lemons curdling the milk of Hindu India. Besides, Indian religious literature such as the Bhagavad Gita of the Tantric texts, which are identified as differing from secular writes seen as 'Western', elicits much greater interest in the West than do other Indian writing, including India's long history of heterodoxy. Other example, Taking note of the denominational diversity of Indians (including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jains, Sikhs, Parsis, Jews and others), a Mughal emperor Akbar also laid the foundations of the secularism and religious neutrality of the state which he insisted must ensure that 'no man should be interfered with on account of religion, and anyone is to be allowed to go over to a religion that pleases him'; which is also a beautiful example of coexistence, acceptance and tolerance. The economist Amartya Sen made a related point in regretting the neglect by the votaries of Hindutva of the great achievements of Hindu civilization in favour of its more dubious features. As Sen wrote about Hindu militants: 'Not for them the sophistication of the Upanishads or Gita, or of Brahmagupta²⁴ or Sankara²⁵, or of Kalidasa²⁶ or Sudraka²⁷; they prefer the adoration of Rama's idol and Hanuman's image. Their nationalism also ignores the rationalist traditions of India, a country in which some of the earliest steps in algebra, geometry, and astronomy were taken, where the decimal system emerged, where early philosophy-

²³ Sadhvi Ritambhara, a Hindu nationalist militant ideologue and the founder chair-woman of Durga Vahini.

²⁴ Brahmagupta, an Indian mathematician and astronomer.

²⁵ Sankara, 8th century Indian philosopher.

²⁶ Kalidasa, Indian greatest poet and Sanskrit writer.

²⁷ Sudraka, an Indian king and playwright.

secular as well as religious-achieved exceptional sophistication, where people invented games like chess, pioneered sex education, and began the first systematic study of political economy. The Hindu militant chooses instead to present India-explicitly or implicitly- as a country of unquestioning idolaters, delirious fanatics, belligerent devotees, and religious murderers. But that choice is elided by the identification of Hindutva with political Hinduism, as if such a conflation is the only possible approach open to practising Hindus or the hinduism which is an eclectic and plural philosophy or idea in search of truth should be followed?

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