

HINDUISM AND CHRISTIANITY

[Inaugural Address delivered by
Mr. Justice R.C. Lahoti, Former CJI
at National Seminar on
Hindu-Christian Amity in India:
Model for Meeting the Challenges of Globalization
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I feel very happy to be associated with this National Seminar on Hindu Christian Amity in India - the Amity which can provide an effective and powerful model for meeting the challenges of globalization. We have a history of rich tradition of past amity which can work as foundation for futuristic vision of hope. My thanks are due to Dr. Subhash Kashyap. RJS and Adenauer Foundation, both deserve to be congratulated for organizing a series of events providing platform for Hindus and Christians in India entering into dialogue for further better understanding of each other and joining hands in their attempt to make this world a better place to live in.

While advancements in the field of science keep on marching with a super speed, equally noticeable are disappointment, distrust, dissatisfaction, sorrow and sense of unfulfilment troubling the humanity. Science can give the joy of achievement but not the sense of spiritual fulfilment.

There is a lot of what is common in Hinduism and Christianity which enables their co-existence and living in harmony with each other. Except for some blunt brushing of thoughts between some hard core

believers on either side and a stray instance or two of conflict created by misunderstanding and dogmas, Hinduism and Christianity have by and large accommodated and embarrassed each other. Both believe in love, compassion and charity as sources of eternal pleasure and deliverance. Both believe in existence of God. Both persuade and preach their followers to set down in search of God as solution to all human ailments. Both believe in divinity and spiritualism. According to great Rishi Swami Paramhans Yoganand, God is approachable. Talking to him, listening to him, thinking of Him and feeling His presence is all possible. He can enable us making unreal real. There is no joy like realisation. And, I feel, this is true of both Hinduism and Christianity. Both believe in yoga as a means of realizing God. Yoga enables gaining of a feeling of complete relaxation, concentration, meditation and achieving cosmic awareness. This is Hindu methodology. In the Bible, Christ says in Matthew 6:22 – "The light of the body is the eye. If therefore thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." And, that is all pervading joyful bliss.

Constitution of India contemplates the existence of a secular State, a secular society. Unfortunately, the word "secular" has come to be misunderstood as a contradiction of religion. Those who can understand the philosophy of Indian Constitution have realised that presence of multiple religions contributes to development of liberal and democratic ideas. There is no place for religious intolerance and accompanying violence in a secular state. Secularism is the recognition of the basic human right of every individual to profess his own faith and even non-profession of any faith. It is a belief that all religions are equally good and effectively lead to realisation of the Supreme. This

belief brings tolerance. Hindus believe in tolerance and in the concept of '*Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam*': the universe is one and all human beings are brothers and sisters. Christianity teaches – Love all human beings and earn their love; that is your reward. Both religions teach compassion not only for all human beings but also for all living creatures. This belief has enabled the emergence of globalization.

Globalization has crossed all natural and geographical borders and certainly broken all man-made or political and diplomatic barriers. It has enabled emergence of a knowledge based society. There have been unprecedented advances and break-through in the field of research and inventions and consequent revelations of mysteries of nature to man. But the unfortunate outcome is that the world is moving towards materialism. Spiritualism is a casualty. Every one needs and also succeeds in getting more and more comforts. Modern society is prone to deriving momentous pleasures. Moral and emotional fabric of human society is under threat. Science and technology associated with globalization aim at making man more comfortable and life more enjoyable but they fail to provide answer to some basic questions: What is the purpose of our existence? Why are we born? What happens after death? Do we just perish like any other object? Or, there is life even after death? Only religion can provide answer to such questions.

Science and technology provide knowledge but not necessarily understanding. Religion and spirituality aim at understanding. Globalization has enabled free distribution of the advantages gained by exploiting nature's potentials. Religion enables discovery and enlargement of one's own potentials. Hinduism and Christianity believe

in perpetual creativity of life. Stephen Hawking has once said, "If one keeps travelling in a certain direction on the surface of the earth, one never comes against an impassable barrier or falls over the edge, but eventually comes back to where one started." I feel, it is a sad reflection on fallibility of globalized materialism - at the end reach wherefrom started. Religion provides the answer. Hinduism and Christianity both believe in and preach love. Shri Sathya Sai Baba says – 'Love expands; it does not limit itself to boundaries'. And, look at the powerful message contained in the poetic prose of Rabindranath Tagore – 'Life is perpetually creative because it contains in itself that surplus which ever overflows the boundaries of the immediate time and space, restlessly pursuing its adventure of expression in the varied forms of self-realisation'

From the subject matter and theme of several sessions which will follow the inaugural session, I find this Meet being participated in by very eminent scholars and seekers of truth – all good human beings. They propose to deal in-depth with challenges of globalization and, at the end, bring out and shape an Indian model for co-existence and understanding between religions. Hinduism and Christianity, on account of their disliking for fundamentalism and liking for universal brotherhood – hospitality, not hostility, are best suited to work together for developing such a model as would meet the challenges of globalization. Hinduism and Christianity do propagate but do not dictate. They have many a things in common, and still, they can learn from each other and unite to better serve the society together. If they unite, others will follow.

I am very confident of the positive results of the National Seminar like the present one. Two great religions of the world coming together holds out a hope for all the religions joining together for a common goal – facing the challenges of globalization and achieving self realisation for the soul. It is not difficult.

In our childhood, each one of us has been busy working out solutions for riddles, puzzles and quizzes. We have remained absorbed for hours until the solution has been found out and once it has been found each one of us has thought how simple and obvious it was. So is with challenges of globalization encountering the faith of religion. Whether a Hindu or a Christian, spiritual resolutions are matters of personal experience. All that is needed is a burning desire assisted by knowledge and understanding free from the shackles of dogma, fanaticism and fundamentalism.

I would end by quoting from a beautiful book 'Christ And Krishna – The Path of Pure Devotion' published by ISCON. It says – "...there is only one religion: loving God with whole heart. This is the essence of Christianity, and the practical application of Lord Krishna's demand that we abandon all varieties of religion and surrender unto Him only".

"Talks of transcendental subject matters are always relished by devotees of the Lord, no matter what their external commitment. Indeed, it is on the basis of such exchanges that we find the common ground of divine love, which provides the antidote to the godlessness and atheism now sweeping the world. It is imperative that we join together in this undertaking, otherwise we may all perish separately. Never have the forces of evil been so rampant or so aggressive, but on

the other hand, never has the mercy of the Lord and the means for developing our dormant love of God been so easily available".

Poet Blake's verse has been quoted-

This life's dim windows of the soul
Distorts the heavens from pole to pole
And leads you to believe a lie
When you see with, not through, the eye.

I have pleasure in inaugurating this Seminar with the fond hope that deliberations hereat would enable us in seeing, not with, but through the eye.

I wish this Seminar all the success.