
UNIT 4 RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall try to arrive at the following objectives:

- We shall try to understand the phenomenon of religious plurality with a special reference to our country;
- We shall try to understand the impact of this phenomenon of religious plurality and its challenge for an adequate response;
- We shall try to understand some responses to the phenomenon of religious plurality; and
- We shall try to propose 'pluralism' as an adequate response to the phenomenon of religious plurality.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Diversity is a lived experience. In our world, particularly in India, we experience diversity of religions, cultures, world-views, languages and customs. India is not only a 'melting pot' of diverse religions but a place of mutual interaction, dialogue and appreciation of everything plural that forms the fabric of our country.

In this unit, we focus our attention on the experience of diversity of religions in our world and in our country and try to understand how we can respond to this dynamic scenario that invites a responsible and creative response. Today people of every religion in the light of their experience of religious plurality are led to reflect on the question of diversity of religions. Why are there many different religions? If God is one, why is there no one religion? How should these religions relate to each other? Yes! No one can escape this and other similar questions.

4.2 THE REALITY OF PLURALITY OF RELIGIONS

The Experience of Plurality

The experience of plurality is an undeniable fact. We, as beings-in-a world, experience ourselves as relating to a world that is embedded with rich and complex diversity.

Within this complexity, we experience a great variety of religions. This experience of otherness of various hues and colours is inevitable and inescapable. We Indians are blessed with great model of unity in diversity. Our country has displayed an amazing ability of accepting and letting diversity flower. This diversity somehow manifests that there is no one meta-way of being an Indian. India has always been a home of diversity and has a rich tradition of harmonious living in a dynamic multicultural society. This characteristic openness to otherness is something our country shares with Asia, which is a continent that bubbles with multiplicity of cultures, plurality of religious traditions, languages and socio-political reality. Our country is a land of immense diversity. Her diversity, which emerges from geography, is reflected in her history and confirmed by the ethnography. Indian culture is therefore by definition a culture of multiplicities, a culture of differences. It may be said that our country not merely tolerates differences, but protects, fosters and celebrates diversity. There are more than 4000 different communities that make our country their home and this diversity extends to religions, languages, cultural practices, dresses, cuisine, levels of economic development, etc. What is ancient and what is most modern are to be found in India side by side. That is why we say that there are many ways of being an Indian. Hence, Amartya Sen says “In our heterogeneity and in our openness lies our pride not disgrace”.

Ethical Imperative of Plurality

The *anubhava* of plurality is inescapable. It challenges us to respond. On the one side there is a tendency of absorption, domestication, totalization, and homogenization of the other into our own categories. This means that the otherness of the other is often flattened down, rounded of its sharp, rough surface and reduced to the same.

Emmanuel Levinas, a French Philosopher, brings home this insight when he points out that the other is often totalized, and hence, the radical exteriority that characterizes genuine otherness is lost and the other is merely included within a totality. True otherness can only be experienced in a relation with a being beyond the totality. It is in the otherness, in the difference, in the plurality that we can experience the being beyond totality. Thus otherness, difference and plurality are the manifestation of the sacred. We might say that difference and plurality is divinely ordained. It is in the horizon of otherness that has to be respected, valued and discerned; we can notice an immanent order within the plurality of religions experiences. This is evident from our sacred writings in our country that welcome every otherness when they say “Let good thoughts come from all directions”. This ethos is grounded in a deep belief that every being belongs to the family of God (*Vasudeva Kuttumbakam*). This belief brings about a deep respect to all religions (*Sarva Dharma Samanvaya*) that is deeply enshrined into the secularism of our constitution. The deep sense of interconnectedness that is embedded in the Vedic teachings or the tribal experience of our people informs the *Dharma* of every Indian to work to build a nation which brings about the welfare of all (*loksangraha*). This welfare is not restricted to humans alone, much less to a caste or class of humans. Thus, we can see that the bedrock of our nationhood is our openness to all beings.

The Experience of Plurality of Religions

The experience of plurality of religions is at the basis of every form of response to the phenomenon of multiplicity of religions. Ordinarily, we all tend to subscribe to a belief that the religion we adhere to enjoys the highest status in terms of truth and validity and so we seem to be unable to question our critic, re-think our tradition from within. As a result the other religions that we encounter are either refuted as mistaken or are

interpreted in the light of the basic principles evolving from the religions of our adherence. This attitude often becomes responsible for separation, distrust and even warfare among religions. But today more and more enlightened humans have come to realize that it is a sort of self-impoverishment to refuse to learn from, differing ways of being human. Hence, our experience of plurality of religions teaches us that diverse religions are basic expressions of different ways of being human. In our country, it becomes a different way of being an Indian. There is no one way of being an Indian. Our unity in diversity is at the heart of our nationhood.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Is India’s diversity a pride? Explain.

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2) Write a short note on religious plurality and different ways of being human.

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4.3 THE MARKS OF PLURALITY OF RELIGIONS

Other Religions as Bridges

Often the other religions were perceived as boundaries and humans took upon themselves as their duty to guard the purity of their religions. A cursory glance of the history of religions reveals a painful narrative of religious violence. The claim of a particular religion to be the only true religion is among other factors that instigate and generate religious violence. Some analysts trace the roots of religious violence to the ‘religious’ following of the well-known theory of Rene-Girard who presents his argument with an analysis of the role of violence in the construction of human culture in general, and religious culture in particular. He teaches that violence is mimesis or the desire to have what another one has. This leads to rivalry and conflict. Since each one has desires violence threatens to pervade the group. At this time violence is projected on a weaker person who is killed. She / he become a scapegoat and provide release from the feeling of violence. Thus, he views religious rituals which are often bloody, as safe detonation of the violent human impulse. Others view the phenomenon of religious violence as complex irrupting in particular circumstances due to many factors that are often extra-religious. These views refer to the abuse of religions for political as well as economic gains. But religions have great resource to building peace and harmony in a violence-ridden world.

Decalogue of Assisi

- 1) We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion, and as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root cause of terrorism.
- 2) We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal co-existence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.
- 3) We commit ourselves to fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among peoples, for these are the premises of authentic peace.
- 4) We commit ourselves to defending the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with their own cultural identity and to form freely a family of their own.
- 5) We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider our differences as an insurmountable barrier, but recognizing instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.
- 6) We commit ourselves to forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices, and to supporting one another in a common effort both to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, and to learn from the past that peace without justice is not true peace.
- 7) We commit ourselves to taking the side of the poor and the helpless, to speaking up for those who have no voice and to working effectively to change these situations, out of the conviction that no one can be happy alone.
- 8) We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we desire to make every effort possible to offer the men and women of our time real hope for justice and peace.
- 9) We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples. For we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes that world to a growing risk of destruction and death.
- 10) We commit ourselves to urging the leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, on the national and international levels, a world of solidarity and peace based on justice.

There is no doubt that religions have a great potential to develop peace and harmony. For instance, Christianity speaks of every human being as a child of God created in the image and likeness of God. Islam considers humans as vice-gerents of Allah. Hindus evoke the presence of the divine in the human in an *Advaitic* (non-dual) perspective, the Buddha nature latent in every human being, and the Jains stand on the ground of *Ahimsa* or non-violence. These and other values flowering in our religious traditions have the great potential that can promote peace and harmony in our world. Hence, religions need to explore the possibilities of setting free these potentials for

building peace and harmony. Inter-religious dialogue needs to become the order of the day at the service of peace.

Religions Serve Humans

We have seen that different religions are different ways of being humans in the world. Hence, the presence of difference, diversity, and otherness draws us to respond respectively and collaboratively. This calls for an attitude of openness and recognition of difference. The religious other is recognized, affirmed and accepted. This presupposes the acceptance of the right of the religious other to be (exist) and to be different. The theist tends to accept difference as divinely intended and as such cannot be domesticated, absorbed and erased into the same. Non-theists accept difference on the strength of the richness of diversity of reality as such. Yet there is religious intolerance springing in certain theists as well as non-theist religious circles. Fortunately, there is world-wide realization that our religious other is first of all a human person. Hence, any interaction whether favourable or unfavourable always takes place among people. It is always real flesh and blood human beings that engage in meaningful dialogue or mindless confrontation. Hence, it is of prime importance to realize that before we are Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jains, and Sikhs, we are humans. This realization is deeply connected to the prospects of peace in our world. Therefore, inter-religious dialogue becomes an important weapon of building peace and harmony. Religious traditions that care for the well-being of society cannot fail to realize the crucial importance of harmony and understanding among the religious groups. Religious groups as social units wield power and their actions affect positively or negatively other religions groups or units in society. This means the fact of being religious does not force them out of the social sphere. Hence, religious traditions have a great responsibility of being self critical. This is often neglected as the religious traditions are engrossed in projecting their noblest images and doctrines. Hence, religious traditions have to conduct a realistic and genuine assessment of their actual state, and role they play or fail to play in the contemporary situation of a society. This will keep religious traditions in touch with actual life and everyday experience. It is only when we have religious traditions that are self-critical that our religions will promote *sarva-jiva-sukham*, happiness to all living beings.

The Irreducibility of Religious Experience

John Hick, a British thinker, relies on Ludwig Wittgenstein's discussion of family-resemblance and attempts to understand plurality of religions. Wittgenstein took the example of games to drive home his notion of family-resemblance. We have different types of games: ball games, card games, games played with sports equipments etc. Some are solitary, others are competitive, and others are played in turns. But all these activities are called games.

Hick derives from the above discussion a way of understanding religions. He says that the different religions form 'a complex continuum of resemblances and difference analogous to those found within a family'. The above concept of religion has its merits, but it might appear to do violence to difference and diversity that we notice among religions. Michael LaFargue and Mark Heim seem to overcome these pitfalls when they view religious faith as an experience of some good, and the experiences are distinctive in each religion. God, Nirvana, Tao, etc have irreducible different meanings. Thus, religions are different systems of meanings built around such distinctive experiences. It is the diversity and irreducibility of religious experience that is the heart of plurality of religions.

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.
- 1) How did Wittgenstein influence John Hick’s thinking on Religious pluralism?
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- 2) How do religions serve humans?
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4.4 SURVEY OF OUR RESPONSES TO RELIGIOUS PLURALITY

The experience of religious pluralism has evoked multiple responses across the world. Alan Race (1983), evaluating the Christian response to religious diversity, coined the threefold Typology: Exclusivism-inclusivism and Pluralism in his book, *Christianity and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in Christian Theology*. But this classification of the various responses has many limitations and one might trace them simultaneously among different members of the same community at the same time. Keeping this in our mind, we shall try to portray different approaches to religious plurality gathering them under four groups. The atheist/naturalist approach, the exclusivist approach, the inclusivist approach, and the pluralist approach.

The Atheist / Naturalist Approach

Hans Küng presents the position of the atheist views on both religion and religious diversity as ‘no religion is true. Or else: all religions are equally untrue’ Quinn takes reductive naturalism as an option by which he seems to explain away all religions as ‘products of merely human projection mechanism.’ Thus, he successfully reduces all religious diversity to non-religious factors. We can notice a naturalistic interpretation of religious phenomena in many western thinkers like Feuerbach, Freud, Durkheim and their successors. This naturalist/atheist approach manifests a clear bias against religion.

The Exclusivist Approach

The term ‘exclusivism’ is etymologically derived from the Latin verb *ex-claudere*, which means to shut out. Persons who hold exclusivism are those who believe that there can be only one true religion and that is ones own. We might trace doctrinal exclusivists or soteriological exclusivists among those who adhere to exclusivism. Doctrinal exclusivists are those who view that the doctrines of our religions are completely true and the doctrines of all others are false. Soteriological exclusivists view that only one religion offers effective path to salvation or liberation. John Hick views such an exclusivist position as unfair, objectionable and opines that it stems from parochial egotism.

The Inclusivist Approach

The inclusivists present one tradition as having the final truth and are an effective way of salvation or liberation while other traditions, instead of being regarded as worthless or demonic are seen to reflect aspects of or to constitute approaches to the final truth or salvation. Among the Christians, this approach becomes an attempt to hold together the two axioms of 'universal salvific will of God' and 'salvation' through God in Christ alone. We can find this position among J.N. Farquhar, Karl Rahner, Gavin Costa and others.

The Pluralistic Approach

The pluralistic perspective maintains that all religions are equally valid paths to God / ultimate reality / the sacred or salvation. Pluralistic approach is greeted as the only adequate model for inter-religious relations. John Hick, Mark Heim, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Paul Knitter, Stanley J. Samartha, Leonard Swidler, Raimon Panikkar, are some of the important exponents of religious pluralism. Although each of them has one's differences yet all of them agree that different religions are diverse means of knowing and experiencing God/ the Really Real and / or ultimate liberation or meaning of life in a culturally, historically and linguistically conditioned manner.

John Hick, for instance, identifies the philosophical theory of religious pluralism as "the theory that the great world religions constitute variant conceptions and perceptions of and responses to the one ultimate, mysterious divine reality and within each of them independently the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to reality-centeredness is taking place. Thus the great religious traditions are to be regarded as alternative salvific 'spaces' within which or 'ways' along which men and women can find salvation, liberation and fulfillment".

Mark Heim has a different approach towards religious pluralism. Mark Heim takes his religious pluralism to its logical conclusion. He states that all religions are real alternatives, with each having its own distinct religious fulfillment. Hick seems to propose that all religions finally serve one end. Mark Heim seems to propose that all religions serve multiple ends. Thus, Heim rejects 'unitive pluralism' of Hick. Unitive pluralism again is guilty of holding that there is one effective religious goal. This is achieved by somehow disregarding all the empirical and phenomenological elements of religions as extrinsic and accidental to the true, core and essential dimension that is somehow thought to be common to all religious traditions. Heim finds this homogenizing tendency of unitive pluralism not free from the hegemony of exclusivism or inclusivism. He says exclusivism, inclusivism and unitive pluralism are imperialistic. The difference is only in degree. He intends to recognize the integrity of religious traditions in their own terms. He finds that this approach can recognize the truth or validity as well as difference across the diverse religions. We have already seen that he has rejected the pluralistic theories that claim to transcend confessional particularity and provide a unique level of religious core common to all religions in a 'no-man's-land.'

Hence, Heim is modest in his claims. For him religious pluralism will have to be among other religious commitments and perspectives, and not above them. He bases his position on the views of Nicholas Rescher and finds a theory that will somehow respond to religious pluralism adequately. Rescher calls his view as orientational pluralism in his work, *The Strife of Systems*. He rejects three possible philosophical responses to plurality: (1) one response he calls the 'unique reality view': reality has a determinate character and only one of the competing descriptions can be rationally adequate; (2)

another response he calls the ‘no-reality view’: there is no ultimate reality or at least none that can be known. Therefore, philosophical truth-problems are pseudo-problems, which need to be reconceived, not answered or argued. The task of the philosopher is to lead people out of their bondage in this mirage; (3) and a third response is ‘multifaceted reality view’: each competing view gives truth, but none gives the whole. He quotes Good-man to make this point “there is no one way the world is, but there are ways the world is”. The inadequacy of each view makes it possible for us to think that an all-inclusive view is possible to arrive through accumulation of all. Rejecting the three positions we have just discussed, Rescher advocates what he calls orientational pluralism. It accepts that one and only one perspective is appropriate from a given perspective, but we must recognize that there is diversity of perspectives. The distinctive thing about Rescher’s view is that a practicing philosopher naturally proceeds by inclining to the unique reality view. Argument and inquiry can operate only from a perspective. From a given perspective there is ultimately one rationally defensible

Rescher advocates the irreducible plurality, and holds that perspectives cannot be combined. Heim recognizes orientational pluralism as the only authentic response to pluralism since it allows us to recognize a religious view as one among many and at the same time maintains its own ‘universal claim’. This means orientational pluralism accepts the validity and universal claim of other religious tradition while at the same time upholding the preferable validity and universal claim of ones our religious tradition. Thus others are justified to hold views that are contrasting to ours. This is a kind of pluralistic inclusivism.

4.5 TOWARDS A FELLOWSHIP OF RELIGIONS

S. J. Samartha says that just after India’s political independence in 1947, despites the fresh memories of how the country was fragmented on religious lines, in the constituent assembly, working on a constitution for the republic of India, there was a suggestion to erase the words “to profess, practice and propagate as a fundamental right of the minority communities. But one can notice an amazing spirit of broad-mindedness and a spirit of tolerance among the founding fathers of our constitution towards the minority communities. Hence, arrogant claims of normativeness of a single monolithic religious tradition are very much against the spirit of our constitution.

Religious pluralism is not just constitutionally upheld, it is also religiously dignified, especially by the Hindu mainstream religion in our country.

The Hindu (Vedic / Vedantic) view of religious pluralism could be summarized thus:

- 1) The One Absolute Reality is *nirguna* Brahman (beyond words and concepts, beyond *nama-rupa*, beyond knowledge and experience). Response to this reality is silence. Brahman is silence!
- 2) The highest metaphysical categories through which the One Absolute Reality is thought of are *sat-cit-ananda*. (*Saccidananda* Brahman is *saguna* Brahman). Response to this Reality is mystical realization of the oneness of Atman and Brahman.
- 3) When the One Absolute Reality is conceived as a Personal God, it is thought of as Father, Mother, Lord, Master, Creator, Preserver, Destroyer, All-knowing, All-powerful, etc. All religions can address the Ultimate Reality with these Personal attributes and yet know no division. Response to this Personal God is love, and loving surrender.

- 4) When the One Absolute Reality is given sectarian personal names, “individuation” takes place in the Ultimate Reality, or rather; division takes place in Human Consciousness regarding the One Absolute Reality. (E.g. Yahweh (Jew). Allah (Muslim), Shiva, Vishnu, (Hindu), etc.). This individuation gives rise to Religious Pluralism, each religion with its own ritual, myth, doctrine, ethics, social structures, and personal/mystical experience. Response to this Reality could be faithfulness and worship, tolerance and co-existence, respect and love for all.
- 5) The One Absolute Reality takes upon itself limitations so as to make it available to human beings: avatars incarnations, manifestations. Human beings build up Images, Statues, Idols, Sacred Places, Sacred Objects, Temples, Mosques, and Churches, etc. The Personal God takes more and more anthropomorphic character. Response to these Incarnations is in terms of worship and rituals, defensive and apologetic, emergence of sub-sects, ritualism, clericalism, etc.
- 6) When worshippers of the (i.e. when one religion tries to impose its theology, worship, image of God, etc. over others), intolerance and conflicts happen between Religions aiming at extermination of other gods and religions.

Hence, religious pluralism that we have seen above is mainly of inclusivist shape and form. Our country also exhibits the pluralist form of religious pluralism. The *Syad Vada* of the Jains is one important form that can generate plural religious pluralism. Pluralism has several values to a contemporary world.

- 1) It provides spiritual and cultural resources for the survival of different people in their search for freedom, self-respect and human dignity. When nations and peoples are politically dominated, economically exploited and militarily intimidated what else do they have for the survival of their spirit except their religions and cultures which can never be taken away from them?
- 2) A plurality of religions, cultures, ethnic groups and languages can be a guarantee against fascism because it will resist the imposition of any “one and only” religion or ideology on all people.
- 3) Pluralism introduces an element of choice by providing alternative visions of reality and ways of life.
- 4) Plurality provides multiple spiritual resources to tackle basic problems which have become global today. The availability of many resources to tackle these problems should not be looked upon with suspicion but accepted with gratefulness. People in mono-religious situations are becoming a little more pluralist.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) How do exclusivists approach the concept of religious pluralism?

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4.6 LET US SUM UP

An adequate and human response to the phenomena of plurality is indeed urgent for the peace and harmony in the world. The peace in the world depends on the peace among religions. Hence, religious pluralism becomes an important way of dealing with our experience of plurality of religions.

4.7 KEY WORDS

- Ethnography** : Ethnography is a kind of writing that uses fieldwork to provide a descriptive study of human societies. Ethnography presents the results of a holistic research method founded on the idea that a system’s properties cannot necessarily be accurately understood independently of each other.
- Culture** : Culture (from the Latin *cultura* stemming from *colere*, meaning “to cultivate”) is most commonly used in three basic senses: 1. excellence of taste in the fine arts and humanities; 2. an integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for symbolic thought and social learning; 3. and the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution, organization or group.
- Parochialism** : The term parochial can be applied in both culture and economics if a local culture or a local government makes decisions based on solely local interests that do not take into account the effect of the decision on the wider community.

4.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Our country is a land of immense diversity. Her diversity emerges from geography reflected in her history and confirmed by the ethnography. Indian culture is therefore by definition a culture of multiplicities, a culture of differences. It may be said that our country not merely tolerates differences, but protects, fosters and celebrates diversity. There are more than 4000 different communities that make our country their home and this diversity extends to religions, languages, cultures, practices, dresses, cuisine, levels of economic developments, etc. What is ancient and what is most modern are to be found in India side by side. That is why we say that there are many ways of being an Indian. Hence, Amartya Sen says “In our heterogeneity and in our openness lies our pride, not disgrace”.
- 2) The experience of plurality of religions is at the basis of every form of response to the phenomenon multiplicity of religions. We might all agree that every religion has always been aware of its religious ‘other’ or that religions are plural or that there are other religions, other than one’s own. This consciousness of plurality has evoked diverse responses from various religions. Hence, the fundamental experience of plurality of religions becomes an imperative that generates authentic dialogical encounters as well as extremist fanatic exclusivist responses. This experience of plurality is indeed foundational because it poses very difficult and relevant questions. How can persons and communities with radically differing conceptions of the world, human life and God come to the understanding and appreciation of each others ways of being human? How with all our diversities, can we humans learn to live together peacefully and engage fruitfully in a complexly interconnected world? These questions are of special importance for us in our country and the response to them can build or destroy our nation.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) John Hick, a British thinker, relies on Ludwig Wittgenstein’s discussion of family-resemblance and attempts to understand plurality of religions. Wittgenstein took the example of games to drive home his notion of family-resemblance. We have different types of games: ball games, card games, games played with sports equipments etc. Some are solitary, others are competitive, and others are played in turns. But all these activities are called games. Hick derives from the above discussion a way of understanding religions. He says that the different religions form ‘a complex continuum of resemblances and differences analogous to those found within a family’. The above concept of religion has its merits, but it might appear to do violence to difference and diversity that we notice among religions.

- 2) Different religions are different ways of being humans in the world. Hence, the presence of difference, diversity, and otherness draws us to respond respectively and collaboratively. This calls for an attitude of openness and recognition of difference. The religious other is recognized, affirmed and accepted. This presupposes the acceptance of the right of the religious other to be (exist) and to be different. The theist tends to accept difference as divinely intended and as such cannot be domesticated, absorbed and erased into the same. Non-theists accept difference on the strength of the richness of diversity of reality as such. Yet there is religious intolerance springing in certain theists as well as non-theist religious circles. Fortunately, there is the world wide realization that our religious other is first of all a human person. Hence, any interaction, whether favourable or unfavourable, always takes place among people. Hence, it is of prime importance to realize that before we are Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jains, and Sikhs, etc., we are humans.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) The term 'exclusivism' is etymologically derived from the Latin verb *ex-claudere*, which means to shut out. Persons who hold exclusivism are those who believe that there can be only one true religion and that is one's own. We might trace doctrinal exclusivists or soteriological exclusivists among those who adhere to exclusivism. Doctrinal exclusivists are those who view that the doctrines of our religions are completely true and the doctrines of all others are false. Soteriological exclusivists view that only one religion offers effective path to salvation or liberation. John Hick views such an exclusivist position as unfair, objectionable and opines that it stems from parochial egotism.