
UNIT 3 INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The Concept of Plurality as a Way of Life
- 3.3 The Idea of Dialogue
- 3.4 The New Dawn of Religions
- 3.5 The Imperative of Dialogue
- 3.6 How Does Dialogue Happen?
- 3.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.8 Key Words
- 3.9 Further Reading and Reference
- 3.10 Answers to Check your progress.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

Diversity or Pluralism is everywhere. It shows in the way different people live, dress, communicate, celebrate events in life, worship, etc. Sometimes these differences are so sharp that they lead to war and tension. The Middle East (Israel and the Arabs) has been on the verge of a major conflagration for half a century and an all out war is a perennial possibility. The so called “clash of civilizations”(Islam and the Western world) between two cultures that even have a common origin (Christians, Muslims and Jews hold Abraham as their prophet), is the other biggest danger of erupting in a world wide conflict. The objective of this study to is understand that even in the midst of deep differences that affect the way we live and communicate with each other, there is always a way to solve the differences. War and clashes is the only alternative. There is another alternative, the alternative of Dialogue. People to worship, dress and live differently can sit down and discuss together the issues that separate them and find a solution. This is called Dialogue. This is particularly important about religious differences. Religion has been one of major reason why people have fought and killed each other for several centuries. Sometimes such tensions take different shapes and affect even areas where religion is the issue at all. This unit helps throw light of the existence of Dialogue as way of settling problems among people but more than that shows the way Dialogue is perhaps the best way for religions to live together without suspicion and hatred.

By the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- Know that Plurality is part of human nature, and diversity is desirable, because it part of nature.
- That Dialogue as a common human objective is desired by all men and women of good will.
- That religions although having their own respective characteristics, can live and co-exist with each other only if they talk to each other in a spirit of Dialogue.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Incidents of violence are common happening today. Often they lead to large scale hostilities, wars and violence. Several times these acts of violence are connected with religious groups. We have seen large scale violence throughout the history of the world. Christians and Muslims fought for decades in Europe and Middle East in what is known as Crusades. The Jews and Arabs have been fighting from the time Israel became an independent country in 1947 and still continue although the fight has become far more bloody and has taken new aspects of political and geographical nature. Hindus and Muslims fought for centuries during the Moghul invasions and the worst and most clash was the partition. When India and Pakistan became two independent countries there were large scale clashes of people including neighbours killing each other for no other reason except that they professed a different religion.

In recent history, 9/11 or the attack on America's Trade Towers in September 2001 where more than 3000 people were killed, was a major milestone of violence which is recognized as one that changed the course of history and is considered as the beginning of the clash of civilizations. Clashes and wars have given birth to new nations like Bosnia Herzegovina, Kososvo, Croatia, etc. Hindus and Muslims have fought on the mere excuse of a cricket match, the carcass of an animal or a religious procession. In Sri Lanka too, the 30 year conflict that caused so much bloodshed was primarily a religious-cultural conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Such conflicts although in a different settings are existent in Afghanistan, Iran, Chechnya, Philipines, Indonesia and there is no sight of any resolution of the conflict soon!

The world's major religions, (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism....) are undergoing a crisis, which we may truly call post-modernity. Although mostly dogmatic and generally change resistant, the factors that are changing the way human kind thinks and perceives has affected these traditional religious systems, more than anything else in its history. All religions are undergoing the most radical, far-reaching, and challenging transformation in history. Humankind itself is passing through a turbulent period and the stakes are pretty high and they affect the survival of the planet.

Amidst this incidents of violence that sometimes have reached huge proportion that seem to indicate that there is no hope for peace, a creative movement is slowly visible. This creative movement or school of thought is leading a new way of thinking, a new way of doing things or a new *global consciousness*. As part of this transformation the human race has drawn itself closer to each other, more than ever before. Distance, language and communication barriers no longer appear so frightening, although narrow groupings still continue to exist. And gently but steadily there is a great urge for spiritual experiences, for a taste of the spiritual.

Modernism and Post-Modernism were identified with the wave of intellectual and scientific awakening in the Western world, that led to a new questioning mindset, including that of religious beliefs and tenets. It questioned facts and predicaments that for long were taken for granted as real and unchangeable. It was also known as the Age of Enlightenment. Over the last four hundred years, Judaism and Christianity—and more recently Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam—

have had to grapple with the forces of modernity, and compelled to assimilate some of its values, at the same time striving to maintain their religious heritage against modernity’s thrust towards de-sacralization (reducing everything to the realm of the non-sacred).

One of the major outcomes of this new quest for meaning and seeking answers to issues that affect our lives, is the bold affirmation of pluralism which has become a widely accepted perspective of life. No longer is one form of expression, culture or way of life, accepted as a compelling reality and plurality of forms and ways of thinking and expressing has gained greater legitimacy. The Age of Enlightenment that sought “unified truth” is no longer the buzz of the world. This has wider significance beyond religious beliefs and practices. As a result of this new form of thinking, the social outlook too has changed dramatically. In the existing systems where people accept or are used to believing that there is only one way of looking at things, often those who are in authority or those able to exercise authority and their views are considered to the only right views. When diversity or plurality gains wider acceptance, people are able to appreciate and understand the existence and need of others. This is particularly true about the fact that new thinking resulted in the more open recognition of the existence and the problems of people who are poor, oppressed, marginalized, those without voice as their voices are not heard, etc. Diversity also brought into the focus the problems of neglected people, because diversity requires that people are enabled to see others as they are, with their difficulties and their different views, and grow in sensitivity in dealing with problems.

Multiculturalism is the accepted reality of the twenty first century in the western world. The fact however remains that the idea of modernity and scientific evidence are concepts unfamiliar to the eastern world. Therefore one must look for other avenues to explain the convergence of view regarding plurality in the eastern world, where there are large numbers of followers of Hindu and Buddhist faiths as well as other eastern or tribal religious streams.

3.2 THE CONCEPT OF PLURALITY AS A WAY OF LIFE

In order to be able to look beyond our immediate concerns, communities, cultures and religious beliefs and towards a wider world, we must disengage ourselves from blind attachment to any particular culture or religion, situating ourselves at a viewing point from where we can see clearly diversity of cultures and religions in a global perspective. In doing so, we will be like someone placed at the top of the mountain who is able to look at the world around him without the constraint of the boundaries of his position.

The astronauts who traveled into outer space and looked back on the earth were overwhelmed by what they saw! For the first time in history, humans actually saw the earth as a whole. They saw the earth’s clouds, oceans, and continents, but not as distinct from the blue planet. The blue planet they saw, was a borderless planet with the clouds, its oceans as one new reality. It was an entirely different one from what we can see on the horizon with its limited vision. What they saw was an interrelated, organic whole—a single globe of remarkable beauty and unity. It is striking that at the very moment in history when culture is becoming

globalized, we have obtained our first time impression of the earth as a single globe. This image of the beautiful blue globe, shining against the black background of the universe, moving in its orbit in space can concretely symbolize the emergence of global consciousness on the eve of the twenty-first century.

History has left a pattern of philosophies and religious movements from vastly distant and different areas of the world, that responded to the world's needs almost in a similar fashion. If we look at our world, during the first millennium B.C.E. (Before the Christian Era), we observe a remarkable phenomenon. From the period between 800-200 B.C.E., peaking about 500 B.C.E., a striking transformation of consciousness occurred around the earth in three geographic regions, apparently without the influence of one on the other. In China, we see two great teachers, Lao-tze and Confucius, from whose wisdom emerged the schools of Chinese philosophy. In India the cosmic, ritualistic Hinduism of the Vedas was being transformed by the Upanishads, while the Buddha and Mahavira ushered in two new religious traditions. Farther west, we discover a similar development in the middle eastern region. In Israel the Jewish prophets—Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah call for a new moral awareness from their people. In Greece where Western philosophy was born, Socrates rouses the moral consciousness of the Athenians and Plato and Aristotle make the first metaphysical forays of the western world, leading into a perspective that is universal against the particular and empirical.

Half a century ago, Karl Jaspers, the German philosopher, made a significant point in his book *The Origin and Goal of History*. Referring to this period from 800-200 B.C.E. he stated “it gave birth to everything which, since then, man has been able to be.” It is here in this period “that we meet with the most deepcut dividing line in history. Man, as we know him today, came into being. For short, we may style this the Axial Period’.” Jaspers’ perspective of history seems to materialize in the fact that humankind underwent a radical change in the way it saw itself and in the way it (mankind) understood its role in the world. This radical perspective of itself, that mankind steadily developed affected every culture of the world, be it China, India, Europe and the Americas. Almost simultaneously we see the rise of great empires in Egypt, China, Mesopotamia, etc. who adopt more refined cultural forms, although largely similar.

Prior to this important period of 800 – 200 B.C, most cultures and religious movements can be easily identified with belief forms that are tribal, ritualistic, mythic and of cosmic nature. All early religious movements were built around visible objects and symbols, and were heavily dependent on rituals (things are done as part of religious practices, including sacrifices, fasts, poojas, etc). Another aspect of early religions and still prevailing among tribals is the myths (beliefs that are based on assumptions, and legends created around that legend, hence called Mythic). This is the characteristic to all primitive communities. From the subsequent development of these tribal, ritualistic, mythic and cosmic nature (making the natural phenomena like sun, moon, earth, seasons, etc part of worship and cult), it becomes clear that the consciousness of these primitive communities had a clearly underlying undercurrent of creative harmony of the world of nature that was celebrated through myths and rituals. Just as they considered themselves part of nature, so also they experienced themselves as part of the tribe. This web of inter-relatedness sustained them psychologically and energized their lives. To be separated from the tribe threatened them with death, not only physical but

psychological as well. However, their relation to the collectivity often did not extend beyond their own tribe, for they often looked upon other tribes as hostile. Yet within their tribe they felt organically related to their group as a whole, to the life cycles of birth and death and to nature and the cosmos.

Check Your Progress I

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

1) What is diversity or plurality?

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2) Why is there a new hope that in spite of our differences, more and more people are talking and working for greater understanding with each other?

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3.3 THE IDEA OF DIALOGUE

The Period of 800-200 B.C. which Jaspers names, the Axial Period ushered in a radically new form of consciousness. There is a clear and definite shift from tribal, collective consciousness to an individualistic perspective of life. The Greek philosophers and thinkers speak of reflection, “know thyself”, the Upanishads teach of the “Atman” reflecting the transcendent within. Gautama Buddha preaches individual enlightenment and the Jewish prophets call for an individual moral responsibility. This period is marked by its complete departure from the tribal and the nature linkage to individual identity as distinct both from the tribe and the nature. From this flow other characteristics: consciousness that is self-reflective, analytic, which can be applied to nature in the form of scientific theories, to society in the form of social critique, to knowledge in the form of philosophy, to religion in the form of mapping an individual’s spiritual journey. This self-reflective, analytic, critical consciousness stood in sharp contrast to primal mythic and ritualistic consciousness. The self reflective “*logos*” (word, reason) replaced the “*mythos*” (myth). It cannot however be denied that mythic and ritualistic forms of consciousness still survive today, but they are often considered as sub-altern.

The paradigm shift from the primal to the Axial period severed the harmony between nature and the tribe, and it empowered the individual with his identity

although without organic harmony with nature and the community. This delinking from nature and life enabled him to question the social structures, and launch himself into the discovery of the abstract laws of nature and their manipulation, as well venture into the beyond through metaphysics. This new way of life was decisive for the emergence of the traditional major religions and their departure from their tribal predecessors. The great religions of the world as we know them today are the product of the Axial Period. Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Judaism took shape in their classical form during this period; and Judaism provided the base for the later emergence of Christianity and Islam.

3.4 THE NEW DAWN OF RELIGIONS

The inwards look by the followers of major religions, in face of this new consciousness released enormous spiritual energy. Meditation and contemplative practices thrived making the inner way and the new found subjectivity an avenue to reach the transcendent. It opened the way for the inner self to sort out the difference between the illusion of the phenomenal world and the authentic vision of reality. On the ethical level it allowed individual moral conscience to take a critical stand against the collectivity. And it made possible to establish a link between the moral and the spiritual aspects of the self, so that a path could be charted through virtues toward the ultimate goal of the spiritual quest. The rise of monasticism is a major product of this new awareness. Although begun first in Hinduism, it saw its definite growth in Buddhism and Jainism, later developed in Christianity.

Whereas in the period 800-200 B.C.E, in the known world we see the unity of perception already mentioned earlier, 20 centuries later at the dawn of 21st. century, we find a similar phenomenon which appears to be as significant as the first one. In the last 50 years almost simultaneously around the world, there has been a steadily growing confluence towards unity: Perestroika, China-U.S, European Union, China-Japan, Pan-African Unity, the call for Ecology preservation, coupled with technology that has brought humankind close to each other, making it to be called a global village are significant signs of returning to primordial unity. Developing and developed countries are seeking to work together, and no longer is this being done, as a matter of appeasement but as a necessity to create harmony that all so dearly desire. None has been more radically affected by this movement than the major religions of the world

Teilhard de Chardin, the great paleontologist, thinker and philosopher concludes that in the last 100 years, due to a process called “*planetization*” (a movement towards bringing together everything on the planet to a kind of organic unity), and a shift has taken place in the cosmos that is oriented towards convergence rather than divergence. According to him, when human beings first appeared on this planet, they clustered together in family and tribal units, forming their own group identity and separating themselves from other tribes. In this way humans diverged, creating separate nations and a rich variety of cultures. However, the spherical shape of the earth prevented unlimited divergence. With the increase in population and the rapid development of communication, groups could no longer remain apart. After dominating the process for millennia, the forces of divergence have been superseded by those of convergence. This shift to convergence is drawing various cultures into a single *planetized* community.

Although we have been conditioned by thousands of years of divergence, we now have no other course open to us but to cooperate creatively with the forces of convergence as these are drawing us toward global consciousness.

According to Teilhard in spite of this global consciousness towards convergence, there will be divergent movements, that will seek to cluster among themselves, which he calls creative unions. The specificity of these creative unions will be, that they will admit plurality within their unions. His concept of diversified unity is beautifully articulated through what he calls the law of “complexity-consciousness” and “union differentiates.” The humankind’s consciousness according to Teilhard has become more and more aware of its unity in spite of and amidst its complexity, with the result that it creates a new paradigm of pluralities within unity. At this point of history, because of the shift from divergence to convergence, the forces of planetization are bringing about an unprecedented complexification of consciousness through the convergence of cultures and religions.

3.5 THE IMPERATIVE OF DIALOGUE

In the first Axial Period (800-200 B.C.) the world religions began on differentiated lines in several geographical areas and were driven by the forces of divergence and as a result developed their consciousness on differentiated lines, from where they began. This produced a remarkable richness of spiritual wisdom, of spiritual energies and of religious-cultural forms to express, preserve, and transmit this heritage. Now that the forces of divergence have shifted to convergence, the religions must meet each other in center to center unions, discovering what is most authentic in each other, releasing creative energy toward a more complex form of religious consciousness.

The dawn of the 21st. century is characterized by a new consciousness that drives towards unity. Inter-religious dialogue is such a creative encounter, that has been called the “dialogic dialogue”(a conversation to bring about understanding,unity) to distinguish it from the dialectic dialogue(a conversation to prove one’s point to other or even to refute the claims of the other). This dialogic dialogue has three phases: (1) The partners meet each other in an atmosphere of mutual understanding, ready to change misconceptions about each other and eager to appreciate the values of the other. (2) The partners are mutually enriched, by passing over into the consciousness of the other so that each can experience the other’s values from within the other’s perspective. This can be enormously enriching, for often the partners discover in another tradition values which are submerged or only inchoate in their own. It is important at this point to respect the autonomy of the other’s tradition: in Teilhard’s terms, to achieve union in which differences are valued as a basis of creativity. (3) If such a creative union is achieved, then the religions will have moved into the *complexified* form of consciousness that will be characteristic of the twenty-first century. This will be a *complexified* global consciousness, not a mere universal, undifferentiated, abstract consciousness. It will be global through the global convergence of cultures and religions and *complexified* by the dynamics of dialogic dialogue.

The forces of convergence are not limited to religious and cultural understanding but are conditioned by the challenge to existence that the earth is passing through. Humankind’s consciousness is reconnecting itself to its roots in the earth, as the

original human populations did. The tools of industrialization, progress and tapping of resources that led to the convergence of humankind are undercutting the biological support system that sustains life on our planet and the future of mankind is shrouded in a cloud of uncertainty by the pollution of our environment, the depletion of natural resources, the unjust distribution of wealth, the stockpiling of nuclear weapons. Unless the human community reverses these destructive forces, we may not be able to continue life here for much longer. The human race as a whole, all the diverse cultures and the religions must face these problems squarely. There is an imperative to rediscover the dimensions of the consciousness of the collective and cosmic spirituality of the primal peoples rooted in the earth and the life cycles.

Inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue must recapture the unity of humankind by seeking humankind as an unity with its diverse cultural and religious perspectives. This means that the consciousness of the twenty-first century will be global from two perspectives: (1) from a horizontal perspective, cultures and religions must meet each other on the surface of the globe, entering into creative encounters that will produce a complexified collective consciousness; (2) from a vertical perspective, they must plunge their roots deep into the earth in order to provide a stable and secure base for future development. This new global consciousness must be organically ecological, supported by structures that will ensure justice and peace. The voices of the oppressed must be heard and heeded: the poor, women, racial and ethnic minorities. The emergence of this twofold global consciousness is not only a creative possibility to enhance the twenty-first century; it is an absolute necessity if we are to survive.

3.6 HOW DOES DIALOGUE HAPPEN?

What does this mean for religions of the twenty-first century? It means that they have a double task: to enter creatively into the dialogue of religions and to channel their energies into solving the common human problems that threaten our future on the earth. It means that they must strip away negative and limiting attitudes towards other religions. They must avoid both a narrow fundamentalism and a bland universalism. They must be true to their spiritual heritage, for this is the source of their power and their gift to the world. They must make every effort to ground themselves in their own traditions and at the same time to open themselves to other traditions. In concert with the other religions they should commit themselves to creating the new complexified global consciousness mankind is experiencing.

Just to meet, even creatively, on the spiritual level is not enough. They must channel their spiritual resources toward the solution of global problems. For the most part, this calls for a transformation of the religions. The religions must rediscover the material dimension of existence and its spiritual significance. In this they can learn from the secular world : that justice and peace are human values that must be cherished and pragmatically cultivated. But they must not adopt an exclusively secular attitude, for their unique contribution is to tap their reservoirs of spiritual energy and channel this into developing secular enterprises that are genuinely human.

The dialogue's initial stumbling block will often be the existence of stereotypes about the "other" that each community has, because any individual's or

community's life experiences are much wider and more complex than issues of religious identity. It is necessary that dialogue aims at dissolving the fundamental objective lying at the core of the human mind about the "other" being what he is, and one being what "one" is. Somehow dialogue has to reach the level where two individuals or communities do not interact with each other as 'One' and the "Other", but on a common identity and platform of human beings who are searching for solutions that are mutually needed and indispensable for living.

Dialogue begins with the willingness to question, and to be questioned, while realizing that mutual understanding and working together toward common goals requires accepting differences. In part, dialogue is an effort to comprehend the inherent value of difference and commonality, for the sake of learning and living together—as well as for the sake of increased productivity and peace in a viable and sustainable human society. Interreligious dialogue provides us with insights into each other and a successful methodology can be found in the experience of thousands of years of our human existence.

There are also structural differences between various religious cultures because of divergent aims and points of view. Therefore dialogue will have to be first conducted within each community, because not seldom there are disputes about the form and aim of intercultural dialogue and often even resistance to the very idea of a dialogue. Therefore, an intra-religious/class/ethnic/gender etc. dialogue has to be initiated, taking into account that religious comments/expressions are not always a sign of strong religiosity but instead point to a strong rooting in a culture in various contexts which we may name "inculturalisation." Hence, all dialogue begins with practical and functional agreements. Dialogue needs pragmatics rather than dogmatics.

Dialogue should focus on specific topics and have specific aims (even sensitive topics such as democracy, human rights, education, globalisation, ecology and religious tolerance, rights of women, commitment to cultural diversity); dialogue cannot remain an exchange of superficialities. Differences should be discussed as well as similarities and commonalities - the aim of dialogue is not necessarily to adopt what the "other" believes or follows, and dilute what one believes, (which could be understood as syncretism or amalgamation), but rather develop a respect for the difference.

Dialogue between Christians and Muslims, and or between Hindus and Muslims or Buddhists, is not without pain and serious difficulties, since discussion on various issues that differentiate one from the other often defy clarification and resolution. The factors that divide are more than what the terms express, as they touch the core of human hearts and minds. Therefore any process of dialogue between cultures and religions should not be restricted to "*culturalisation*" (tendency to reduce everything that is being discussed to culture) and "*confessionalisation*" (tendency to reduce everything that is being discussed to religion). What is needed therefore is to understand the 'other' by broadening and extending the dialogue beyond the realm of religious beliefs and practices: Dialogue efforts have to happen simultaneously at all levels, between communities and groups representing several areas of human activity, in diverse lived social and cultural situations. Similarly, 'Dialogue is not a random conversation, but aims at persuasion, at discovering the truth. Otherwise it is worthless'

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) What are the primary requisites for religions to enter and sustain genuine inter-religious dialogue? What attitudes are essential?

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2) What do you understand by “culturisation” and “confessionalisation”. Why should dialogue go beyond these two?

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3.7 LET US SUM UP

When we talk about religious pluralism, we are talking about a new encounter; an encounter with a “difference” or “otherness” in whatever religious form it may take. It may appear to be a cliché, but an inter-religious encounter is much more a meeting with two people with different ideas, likes and dislikes. It often is a meeting with someone who treasures something that I find preposterous, unacceptable, stupid or despicable. Raimundo Pannikar, who has done a great deal of work on inter-religious dialogue, says that “What to do with the barbarian?” is the central question for religion in the time of pluralism. We all have some notion of “barbarian” in our minds: for all of us, there is some presence, some person, or some tradition that is barbarian to us. In practicing religious pluralism, let us ask how it is that we make a relationship with that which is other or different from ourselves. “Pluralism respects the differences that reside in the variety of religious traditions, without reconciling or integrating those differences into a single path. Pluralism is willing to rest in the ambiguity of religious difference. From this point of view, pluralism is a very courageous practice, an engagement with the *fact* of diversity in our world. And this practice is appropriate and important for contemplative communities. In fact, I’m not sure if it is possible to be truly contemplative without engaging in pluralism.”

Although the principles of inter-religious dialogue appear to be philosophically clear, the task of real dialogue is extremely different. To commence and sustain

dialogue between different religions and cultures, it is absolutely indispensable for us to adopt new methodologies of understanding the “other”, which is different from any other existing model of communication. When we know we have a limited perception of a reality, which is outside us, it is possible to discuss this perception with others, since the perception of others about the reality is also limited. We can use commonly accepted categories and symbols that can help us communicate in the same level.

In interreligious dialogue the process is far more difficult, because the perception of the “other” is original and perfect. Who I am in dialogue with, does not have the same perception of the reality that I have about what I believe, in the similar manner. I do not have the slightest understanding about what the other believes, and yet we communicate. Dialogue seeks truth by trusting the other, just as dialectics pursues truth by trusting the order of things, the value of reason and weighty arguments. Dialectics is the optimism of reason; dialogue is the optimism of the heart. Dialectics believes it can approach truth by relying on the objective consistency of ideas. Dialogue believes it can advance along the way to truth by relying on the subjective consistency of the dialogical partners.

There are certain ground rules or indispensable prerequisites for dialogical dialogue. These include a deep human honesty, intellectual openness and a willingness to forego prejudice in the search for truth while maintaining “profound loyalty towards one’s own tradition.” In fact, the starting point for dialogical dialogue is the internal or *intra*-personal dialogue by which one consciously and critically appropriates one’s own tradition. Without this deep understanding of and commitment to one’s own tradition, there are simply no grounds for the dialogical dialogue to proceed. Second, one needs a deep commitment and desire to understand another tradition which means being open to a new experience of truth since “one cannot really understand the views of another if one does not share them.” This is not to assume an uncritical approach to the other tradition so much as a willingness to set aside premature judgments which arise from prejudice and ignorance, the twin enemies of truth and understanding.

Although our cultural and religious traditions have been conditioned by thousands of years of divergence, animosity, and violence, we can still envision a world human society in which all men and women experience a peaceful, healthy and safe environment. A world where all citizens have access to quality education, health care, and housing. An ecologically balanced, *global society* wherein the opportunities created by a just and equitable order are truly accessible to all. In order to release our full potential, the advent of *global consciousness* should allow for the total elimination of the social problems that inhibit the equality of humankind.

Although the friction and the resulting clashes and bloodshed existed in our society for centuries, human kind always yearned for something better, something that is part of our consciousness, or we may even call it global consciousness. There is no doubt that humankind has yet to actualize its full potential, and even our best efforts at creating a better world have fallen far short of the mark. As the twenty-first century transits, there is clear evidence of an emerging social awareness that over time, problems such as these can and must be solved on a global scale. There is a crying need for a global ethos (good way of living).

3.8 KEY WORDS

- Diversity or Pluralism** : Diversity of pluralism is the ability to see the many forms of life or differences of opinion that exist around us and accept them as such, without wanting to reduce it to one’s limited view.
- Planetization** : Planetization is a term used by Teilhard de Chardin, to explain the underlying forces or dispositions of everything in our world towards creating an organic unity, through interdependence, understanding, adaptation, social justice, etc. in order to reach harmony, peace and progress.
- Complexification of Consciousness** : Complexification of consciousness is the theory that attempts to explain the existence of diversity (multiple forms) of nature including beliefs and opinions while at the same time, an underlying sense and need of unity, harmony and peace as a legitimate desire of humankind.

3.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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3.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 1) Although our world is made of millions of things one different from the other, from colours (millions of combinations) to immense differences of plants and animals as well as thousands of different ways, people eat, drink, dress and think, often we are accustomed to think and see the world through very limited and even narrow outlooks, mainly because as a group and community we have certain common ways of doing and seeing reality. Diversity or plurality (in our context) is the ability to see reality as it is and accept it in our conversation and dealing with others.
- 2) Because although in the last 50 or more years more and wars and clashes have taken place that appear only to be getting worse, more and more people and greater efforts are being made to bring people together through globalisation, communication, travel, more equal distribution of goods, creating more and more bodies where consensus and conversation take place. More and more people see the needs to talk, negotiate, understand, etc in order to bring about peace and harmonious living.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

- 1) In order to be able to dialogue one must first of all understand his own religion and draw strength from one's own beliefs. It is there that he will be aware of his own limitation and the need to find it. Dialogue begins with the willingness to question, and to be questioned, while realizing that mutual understanding and working together toward common goals requires accepting differences. In part, dialogue is an effort to comprehend the inherent value of difference and commonality, for the sake of learning and living together—as well as for the sake of increased productivity and peace in a viable and sustainable human society. Interreligious dialogue provides us with insights into each other and a successful methodology can be found in the experience of thousands of years of our human existence.
- 2) *Culturisation* is an attitude that tends to place everything that is part of our human life under the banner of culture, and discuss it as such, while *confessionalisation* is the tendency to reduce everything to religion. It is important to understand here that human groups and communities have diverse ways of looking at life and living it which takes the sum total of human action much beyond culture and religion. Many gestures and customs are a result of many other factors that identify a group and form part of its belief system. Dialogue therefore is a conversation of taking to each other without labelling each other's action under a particular label.