

## **FOREWARD**

It is a welcome feature that humankind is in possession of multiplicity of cultures each having its distinctive characteristics. Culture in all its facets and dimensions is a crucial constituent and instrument of human development. It is a state of being, a mode of thinking, a way of living, and a set of commonly shared values, belief patterns, practices and efforts. It is a complex whole comprising of knowledge, customs, conduct, morals, law, and artistic, scientific and technological pursuits, humanities and social sciences. It is an individual as well as social affair. It is a totality of heritage borne by a society. It is crystallization of material, mental, intellectual and spiritual wealth generated and preserved by the society. It contributes to discovery of meaning of life and enhances quality of life. Thus, it enriches life, enlarges fullness of life, brings delight of mind, and sharpens intellect and ushers in plenitude of peace. But it is for human to live up to them or falter and fail.

The multi-hued tapestry of world cultures glitters with numerous shining strands, right from the dawn of human civilization. The multiple cultures of world are quite varied and astonishing. They display some commonalities as well as differences, similarities as well as dissimilarities. However, the variety of cultures has broad similarities which may enable us to have mutual understanding and call for a need for peaceful co-existence with mutual reinforcements. They provide richness to human heritage and are valuable in themselves. In every culture there has been ceaseless flow of several thought currents with new tributaries joining them. There is multiplicity embedded in unity and therefore human civilization is comparable to a garland of varied and variegated flowers each contributing to the symbiosis of the mixed fragrance. It is like a symphony of the play of multiple musical instruments in an orchestra each contributing its melodious tune to the totality. Of course, there have been some jarring notes but they should be treated as aberrations rather than normal happenings. So, the point is that multiculturalism has come to stay. Therefore, it would not be wise to talk in terms of ‘clash of civilizations’ since all cultures and civilizations are of equal value and utility, and complementary in character. The need of the day is cultural dialogues, mutual give and take, harmony and concord. Any talk of cultural superiority or hegemony is harmful to peaceful living and global harmony.

### **Cultural Dialogue**

In view of this rich diversity there should not be any insistence on uniformity or unanimity in our modes of thinking and ways of living. Therefore, it would be improper

and unjust to insist that there can be only one way of approaching reality. No school of thought originated in cultural vacuum and none developed in isolation or in closed compartments. It has been enjoined that truth can be approached, understood and expressed in diverse ways and therefore the game of theorizing can be played by mutual supplementations and complementaries. There have been mutual borrowings and corrections. There have been agreements to disagreements. But there has not been mutual ignoring or overlooking. Therefore, there can be multiple ways of approaching and describing this multi-faceted Reality. The point to be noted is that all strands are complementary in character. They belong to the same genus and differ only as species. These differences are significant and of great worth since they provide variety and richness and therefore they are to be valued.

Reality is manifold and variegated and it is experienced as multifaceted and multilayered. Because of its variety and manifoldness there can be multiple ways and approaches to comprehend Reality and to describe it. In view of this rich diversity there should not be any insistence on uniformity or unanimity in our modes of thinking and ways of living. There cannot be any regimentation in this regard. So it would be improper and unjust to insist that there can be only one particular form of theorizing that has to be universally acceptable. Genuine thought enterprise has to stem from concretely lived experiences that are culturally conditioned and therefore democracy in ideas has to be the guiding point. There should always be a scope for healthy intellectual disagreement. The thoughtful and creative minds need not always agree or think along a fixed path. There is room for debate and discussion, mutual exchanges, give and take, to arrive at truth. Even though there can be diverse modes of thinking this enterprise has to be rational, logical and methodical. Then only it is reasonable and acceptable. In ancient times this was properly appreciated and practiced but later on some sort of dogmatism vitiated intellectual atmosphere. There is a need for revival of this approach. Then only fresh approaches, newer intuitions, novel insights and innovative ideas can be possible.

### **Indo-Iranian Dialogues**

With this background, Indian Council of Philosophical Research in collaboration with Iran Culture House, New Delhi, organized two bilateral seminars, one in New Delhi and the second in Tehran, with erudite scholars from both the countries participating.

India and Iran have centuries old deep historical and cultural intercourse and cross-cultural relations in various social, economic, political, scientific and other fields which have enriched both the countries. In the past the two countries enjoyed geographical contiguity and therefore there has been uninterrupted flow of people, material and ideas

between the two. There has been strong Vedic and Buddhist influence on Iran which has been duly acknowledged. Reciprocally Iranian scholars have interacted with Indian scholars. Iranian people have viewed Indian friendship positively and Indian scholars in turn have appreciated Iranian culture. So, it can be legitimately said that the two countries are cultural cousins. Their civilizational ties provide corner stone for multidimensional and longstanding relationship. India has always warmly received Iranian people. Iranian influence is visible on Indian art, architecture, music and literature. A good number of Indian people use many Persian words as they are absorbed in Indian languages. In most of the major Indian Universities there are departments of Persian studies.

In recent times there has been improvement in warmth between the two countries because of some mutually useful factors. Our partnership engagements and mutual interactions have increased manifold. But now there is a need for greater constructive re-engagement. We have to revisit our centuries old warm relations. This requires collaborative development. We have to forge lasting friendship.

It is well said that trading in goods have ephemeral value but exchange of ideas has lasting effect. Sufism is an example of such a situation. It is a meeting point between the cultures of India and Iran. Both countries find followers of Wahadat-e-Wujud and Wahadat-e-shudut. There are important Sufi shrines and Sufi saints in India and Iran and they command great respect. Sufism has therefore great potentiality of forging lasting friendship. Indian Prime Minister Hon'ble Shri Narendra Modi is very much emphatic on this point. All this requires sustained efforts through seminars, symposia, conferences, workshops and people to people contacts.

At the end, I congratulate Dr. Mohd. Ali Rabbani Cultural Counselor of I.R.Iran, New Delhi and his team mates for taking this literary initiatives in bringing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Issue of English Quarterly Journal Cultural Dialogue on Spirituality and Mysticism and I hope it will be of immense significance for the researchers and scholars.

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