

Interfaith Dialogue based on Mystical Bonds

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Abstract:

The role of religion has been very significant throughout historical developments. Today, the interfaith dialogue has emerged as a crying need whereas the religions are actually different and diverse and many conflicts and quarrels have taken place in the name of religion. How we can provide a model for principles and guidelines of interfaith dialogue? In recent years, some theories and views have been presented about the method and policy of interfaith dialogue and some suggestions were given to benefit from them to promote the mutual understanding, respect, tolerance and cooperation. However, the presented solutions remain far from ideal aims. This article will explore some methods of dialogue including the triple paradigms of John Hick, Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue and theory of antiphony by Koyama. Then it will discuss the use of these dialogues based on mystical contemplation. In my view, the final presented method could be a more secure way of dialogue between religions compared with other ones. The article tries to introduce and present the best useful method, policy and practice of interfaith dialogue by investigating and analysing these four methods.

Keywords: Dialogue, Religions, Mysticism, Spirituality, Interfaith Dialogue.

Introduction

Apart from some competition, propaganda and claims, religion is a phenomenon to create harmony and understanding of humanity and is a fundamental approach to build the relationship between them. Religious values and beliefs, Religious leaders and faith-based institutions also have a high scope for peace in society and among nations, but history narrates numerous cases of hostility between religious people and bloody clashes

between followers of one religion or between followers of different religions.¹ There are different views on the causes and motives of this violence. Some people consider the real motive of religious conflicts to be political issues for economic interests and these conflicts have little to do actually with religion. Yet it is not very much irrelevant with the way of practices of religious people. According to some people those who are usually involved in clashes & violence are not truly religious. Some intellectuals believe that the root of conflicts are rivalries of religious leaders, dissatisfaction and needs, historical issues, political tendencies, economic interests and nationalist issues.² In recent centuries, interfaith dialogue has appeared as a way to avoid animosity between different followers of the Religion and it seems that although the proponents of this plan accept these factors as causes and animosity among the followers of religions, but at the same time emphasize another factor, which is mutual understanding between the followers of religions.

Since the twentieth century, this concept of dialogue has been largely observed in research on the relationship between religions and the necessity and possibility of dialogue with topics such as reaching common ground in the definition of God as the basis of peaceful coexistence. Humans have created the category of morality and hope for the common future of religions overcoming the past history and dialogue between religions as a paradigm has taken different forms and has been widely reflected. The reason for this is also sought in the specifics of the new age. Scholars consider it to be the principle of a different and at the same time effective worldview. A worldview that has both positive and negative consequences from this. But each of these could have a religious or non-religious basis because everybody in this world has its own way to recognise the world.³

¹ . The Holy Quran always warns Muslim of hostility to followers of other religions such as in Ale Imran, 19, 105; Baqarah, 113; Mayedah, 64, 14.

² . The Role of Religion in Conflict and Peace - building, British Academy for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Sep. 2015, p. 1

³ . Paul Tillich, (1957), Worldviews were seen as human reactions to fundamental concerns and issues. Mackenz (1991, p 13) later added his concern to this. Ninian Smart (1983), a prominent historian of religion, cites a six-dimensional paradigm and sees them as commonalities between religious and non-religious worldviews. These common dimensions are: empirical, mythological, doctrinal, moral, ritual and social dimensions. Wright (1992) discusses the Enlightenment worldview and considers the supernatural as completely different from nature. Berger Luckmann 1967 considers cosmologies to be rational structures and ideological patterns that can be a criterion for measuring ideas. Cox 1999 speaks of a special kind of capitalist worldview, in which he points to valuable and valuable things among the theists. Scoser 2002, pp. 225 and 261, refers

The basic question here is how to make the connection between all these worldviews. The connection that leads to understanding and tolerance. The question mark of this model of discourse can lead to the greatest mutual understanding between different worldviews, both religious and non-religious. The methods that are used to achieve this goal are dialogue based on the idea of religious pluralism, dialogue based on me and you, dialogue based on me and me, and dialogue based on Dervishism or mysticism.

Dialogue based on pluralism

Since the beginning of discussion about the issues related to the plurality and difference of religions and their legitimacy, various answers and approaches have emerged, the most important of which are: the approaches of religious exclusivism, religious inclusiveness, religious relativism and the approach based on interfaith dialogue or pluralistic religion. The roots of religious pluralism must be traced to cultural orthodoxy and then to the relativism of philosophers such as Wilhelm Dithery and Ernst Troeltsch whose researches are based on religion with historical perspective and conclude that the theologies are heavily influenced by historical, social, and cultural conditions, and therefore no religious or theological system can claim absolute pluralism. The pluralism of religion in itself have hermeneutic and various epistemological and psychological bases which are not being discussed here. The biggest philosophers of religious pluralism are John Hich, Wilfred Cantwell smith, Ninian Smart, Raimundo Panikkar who have done tremendous works in this regard such as John Hick who has addressed religious pluralism in his book “God has many Names; the myth of God incarnation” arguing that the idea of God-centeredness in religions had replaced the traditional idea of Christ-centeredness or church-centeredness, dealing with the so-called religious paradigms of exclusivism, including Pluralism has shaped what is at stake in pluralism versus exclusivism in general and without its various interpretations.

Based on religious pluralism, there is a single ultimate reality that has been experienced in all major religious traditions and all equally offer effective ways to salvation and redemption. Due to the great religious pluralism of the world, they express different

to the worldviews that can create the most harmony. Scoser goes on to talk about the impact of these worldviews on the food industry and emphasizes consumerism. Wright and others enumerate symbols based on stories and anecdotes that tell the facts of people's lives and consider them as the practice of human life today. These symbols are: chimneys (symbol of industrialization), banknotes (capitalism), golden bows (consumerism), hammer and sickle (communism) and cross (Christianity). [17], pp6-7

human perceptions and perceptions of an infinite divine reality and their response to it. Keeping in view of this that Allah, Yahweh, Krishna, Shiva, father of Jesus are different manifestations of a single reality in human consciousness as well as in the context of different culture and history seems to be partly the product of human mental outbursts. Totalitarianism monopoly stands against religious pluralism which means to confine the right and salvation in a particular religion.

Although there seems to be a great difference of opinion between exclusivism and pluralism, in practice and in interfaith dialogue there is no tolerance between the exclusivists and pluralists both although in the both intolerance is not same. The worst part of totalitarianism is that both parties in their minds have their own desires and they say that if everyone agrees with me, everything will be fine, which is an abnormal voice that does not lead to any kind of harmony. This is the same totalitarianism monopoly which lacks tolerance; in this case exclusivists feel that pluralism doesn't tolerate them. There is another problem with the evaluation of religious beliefs by the exclusivist that they prefers one over the other. While pluralism discusses theories about religious beliefs not religious beliefs itself and therefore it can be said that exclusivism today has continued in a complex way and the dialogues have been reduced to a kind of piety, it seems difficult that all are speaking, but no one is listening. That's why the religious dialogues do not reach at tangible result. It seems that the basis of all monologues is me and he instead of me and you or sometime it is based on only I and I approach.

Conversation based on me and you

Martin Buber 1878-1965 an Austrian Jewish philosopher and writer, in his most important philosophical essay, writes about two ways of interactions as I and you and I and he. His main theme is that we can think of two kinds of interaction.

The I and he interaction is a relationship with a thing which is independent of us and we can experience it or use it. This kind of relation is related to the sensory and experimental world.

The I and you interaction is a relationship between people with each other and they have no boundaries. This relationship exists in the soul and mind of a person. And basically, this feeling or idea is one of the fundamental perceptual issues of human beings.⁴

According to Buber, human life is a place where the life of discourses takes place. It does not mean that human beings should make every effort to communicate with others, but real life is the human relationship and it is our duty to express our feelings to a friend, even if he has not done anything special for us, because we trust him and I must respond positively to him.

According to Buber the human life become meaningfull only due to these relationships and all communication eventually becomes a relationship with God, who is always a “you” for us. According to him, when the relationship between you and me spreads it led to eternal existence of God who is interpretation of eternity, and thus he believes that relationship with the divine existence (Almighty) is totally based on I and You relationship and it cannot be I and he. I cannot say my word without interacting with the outside of the world. “You” always indicates the relationship and presence and our relationship with you (rest of the world) gives meaning to life and leads us to evolution. Therefore, man, in addition to his fellow human beings, should communicate with other living beings, such as animals and plants, and with the divine being, pointing to the exception that exists in the relationship between God and man. On one hand there is unlimited gap between us & God and on the other hand, God encompasses the whole world and me. According to him, man's relationship with God is one of a kind. It is not like man's relationship with others but an exceptional relationship that encompasses all his other relationships.

According to Buber, man can look towards life with the I and Him approach and consider it as a destiny that has been imposed on him and he can take it as tool of relationship, then he can think of life as an address to himself, just like the request he should know and man should react to this fact. In this case, life is the answer, so the average person should say the answer, but at the same time, one should keep in mind that there is no you without me. Donald Walsh in his book “Conversation with God” says that by communicating with other people there are places and events that you can exist in. Remember if things

⁴. The Article “I and You” by Martin Buber was published for the first time by Ronald Gregory in 1973 and then by Walter Kaufmann was translated into English. Its Persian Translation for the first time was done by Mr. Abutorab Sohrab and Ms. Elham Atardi.

are no longer you are no longer. Look at relationships as a means of completion of your existence .

In this type of relationship, man experiences the relationship and decides to reveal his existence through himself in this relationship instead of taking possession of another. He realizes that it is with you that I find meaning and appearance comes from hearing. Another precise thing about dialogue in Buber's works is that this term is not only related to words, but is a step towards knowing and understanding existence. Therefore, from their point of view, conversation is a relationship. It is going on, so man in I and You relationship finds the possibility to be free from himself and find his world and face the whole world .

Conversation based on the principle of antiphony

In contrast to Buber's discourse model, Iwao Koyama (1905-1993), student Nishida school of thought⁵. In his book "Logic of Basho" he introduces the principle of antiphony and considers the meaning of this principle as calling and answering or calling and responding to a call. In other words, if there is a voice, there must be an answer, and if there is an answer, there must have been a voice or call. In short, the antiphony is one condition of human existence .

According to Koyama, dialogue is a secondary nature of human beings that people enter into that during conversation, but also a part of the existential structure of human beings. Therefore, what happens in dialogue is not only the relationship between two people but also the relationship between two issues. Identity has no meaning for human beings if he is living alone, but the identity of human existence and its individuality are determined in his social life.

Koyama's ideology is like a recall of the theory of the conversation of I and me which has been said about Martin Buber. Here, two conscious individuals are in a struggle to prove themselves. In the process of this conflict, the two sides take away the attribute of being a person from each other and visualize at night. The motive for such a thing, according to Nietzsche, is hegemony or lack of security over identity-building foundations, and according to Sartre, due to the tension in human self-consciousness.

⁵ . Nishida, (1870- 1945), famous Japanese Philosopher and founder of the Kyoto School of Thought.

But what we are talking about not I and Me relationship, but the reciprocal relationship between two selves or themselves. In his view, human beings are not chemically opposed to each other, but are a dynamic relationship interacting with each other. Such an interaction actually shapes and nurtures the situation. Antiphony means that two people are considered as two me and not 1 me and one you. Here, the meaning of the two me is one actually. In other words, it is no longer a dialogue, but a monologue, it is not in the form of two people, one asking a question and the other answering .

For Buddhist thinkers, deep self-awareness leads to a kind of self-awareness in which the independent self is nothing more than a merciful and imaginary thing. This awareness generally appears in two stages. In the first stage, it recognizes its self-realization and its dependence on the identity structure and it becomes aware of his attachment to universality. In the next stage, consciousness leads to awareness of the fact that totality and transcendence does not exist by itself, but arises in a person who embodies self-consciousness in every moment.

However, if one realizes that what we call ourselves is nothing but a whole, then one can see the similarities in each difference. In other words, just as differences are known, so are similarities. This form of self and the other is an expression of one thing. In other words, there is a plurality of unity. In this case, where self-awareness leads to other consciousness, it can be the starting point of understanding universality and moving towards peace and tolerance.

James Heisig (B. 1944) a philosopher of religions in Japan in his book “Nothingness & desires” describes the Koyama’s theory and says that the model of antiphony in the dialogue of religions is similar to playing jazz music in which the musician is not only aware of his presence but also shares it with others and at the same time he enjoyed the commonality of the music shared with others. In religious dialogues also both sides are usually seems to be adamant on their point of views and trying to maintain their individuality and this caused a sort special Rhythmic tune while a changed antiphony happens.

According to Heisig the actual antiphony is a model that can make conversations both interesting and disturbing because both experiences show a personal trajectory that reflects the mental and ideological limitations of individuals. Ultimately, in a true

dialogue, one must realize that one can understand as per his own intelligence not on the basis of others mentality so our mentality and experience may not be true for others. However, participating in a discourse with the intention of listening rather than persuading is difficult because such a discourse challenges one's presuppositions and structural identity. It sometimes may offend him, but in any case this is the only way to accept plurality and at the same time achieve unity.

Dervish-based dialogue

In mysticism, it is said that the mystic uses his efforts to transcend the world of forms and appearances and to pass from the world of multiplicity to unity, and it is through this that the world of multiplicity turns into unity, according to Sheikh Shabestari in *Masnavi Golshan Raz*. As long as you and I are concerned, we will talk about my religion and yours, and when these fractions are drowned in the sea of unity and become an ocean, the Kaaba, the idols, the monastery and the church will no longer be different. It has created different religions that even if we look at mystical thought without considering other religions, we see that there are these common features. Common similarities can be the basis for interfaith dialogue. These following common grounds are very important in the discussion of interfaith dialogue:

Pure silence

Unlike other methods in which saying and expressing opinions is the main factor of dialogue in mystical conversation, silence is a key factor & it is to talk to Almighty. It is the only way to listen & understand the other side's ideas, not only the ideologies but also the feelings and perceptions are important to enter another world, and this requires that one should be able to meditate on other spiritual capacities, worships and rituals and myths of the other side. To achieve this goal, one must pay due respect to the symbols besides listening to the other side. In this conversation, we encounter an orthodox conversation that has a different language. In such a situation, they must not go to talk about the way of worship together, but they must seek to identify the suffering of human beings and the environment of the entire brotherhood, and they must look together who needs help. Every Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and other religion followers have their own views on how to deal with injustice, pain and violence. Differences are not always the cause of conflict but it can lead to growth and perfection.

Tolerance based on the idea of unity in plurality

Among the works and literary masterpieces of Persian Literature, Rumi's Masnavi, is a very valuable and precious book and according to the late Homayi, it is unique work done by a human being, it is a book of dialogue whose infrastructure is narration in such a form, that all of its content have a special effect.

Rumi believes more than anything else in the coexistence of human beings. The mirror in his hand shows no other image than harmony and harmony. He believes that human beings are one in the same and that borders and seas and waterways cannot bifurcate them, so he considers all hostile problems due to superficiality, fundamentalism and narrow mentality.

According to Ibn Arabi, God is the source of all diversity in the world, therefore the diversity of beliefs among human beings belongs to him. In his view, the diversity of beliefs is one of the signs of this holy hadith that God's mercy precedes His wrath, at the end, everything will face his mercy.

Ibn Arabi constantly emphasized on this that all things are related to each other originated by a divine source which is nothing but the almighty. All the diversity of universe is nothing but the external appearance of the divine names, which are the aspects through which God is directed towards. So all theologies belongs to a single existence and the difference of each is due to differences in proportions and surroundings. It should be noted that although Ibn Arabi considers all religions & sects as enlightenment, but he consider H. Muhammad (p.b.u.h) as the sun next to the stars, and when the sun shines, the stars disappear. Although there are other revelatory religions, but their light is assimilated with the light of the sun. They exist just like the stars. So he concludes that belief in the truth of the prophets and the religions of revelation is essential.

Contrary to the opinions of many people who believe that there can be no serious dialogue between religions and this dialogue takes place only superficially, Ibne Arabi believed that the dialogue of religions is possible only with serious willingness. According to Ibn Arabi, differences lead to new movements and narrations, differences between religions precedes the supreme unity of religions and the unity of existence. It is the primary that can ultimately lead to the consensus in which the external languages are silenced and the esoteric languages begin to communicate, and in these circumstances the

differences between religions becomes secondary and Everyone talks about the existence of Almighty God.

Spirituality

Spirituality is something beyond the appearances of the universe and the purification of inner side of the world and has a deeper look at the mysterious world or consciousness from another level. This is something beyond of simple reality of daily life. Such experiences are part of core religious traditions, many of which can be traced back to the changing moments of spiritual revelation and induction.

Spiritual experience is not an experience that is necessarily a reflection of specific religious ideas, but rather an inexplicable effect on the ordinary life of people with such experiences. And it is guidance for a person to consider such a thing as a result of religious teachings or to consider it more simply as another dimension of life, but in fact many of these teachings have been in the core preaching of religions. Therefore, it can be said that spirituality. Closely related to religion while many religious traditions are rooted in the spirituality of prominent people. However, spiritual experiences are probably one of the broadest human experiences that lead man to a higher truth in life or imply moral rules, and what in these experiences is always emphasized is the inner peace which is probably meditation.

Therefore, the dialogue between religions at first level should be related to depth and actuality of the religions, the spiritual life and religious experience. In these kind of dialogue a pious person with a spiritual person must not contain himself to his own traditions, but he must have the knowledge others too. In fact, it can be said that these people, see others in this spiritual journey, not in front of each other, but next to themselves in their journey, and in fact, they become people who are on the path of perfection. And they flourish more in the experience of faith, and these ideologies can reveal two secrets. The first secret is based on the idea that God speaks in another way, and we should do the same, and the second secret is that others have the right to be benefit, which can complement each other. People are completion of our righteousness and no one can claim to be a friend of the whole truth or aware of all the divine secrets.

Prayer is a model for dialogue

The necessity of participation and interaction of the two existences in the prayers is also considerable. According to Ibn Arabi composed verses, human's prayers is a dialogue between God's mercy and man's gentleness. Based on participatory method it requires imagining the two humans in dialogue with each other, because the mercy of God is not only in the direction of the creator to the creature or from the beloved to the lover, but also from the creature to its creator from the lover to his beloved. There is divine mercy in the worship of God, eager to go out of the hidden depths of the unseen horizons because the prayers or worships are nothing but a return towards God.

The importance of interaction with God's servants

It is already mentioned in Martin Buber's dialogue model, that man's relationship with God is an exceptional relationship that includes all his other relationships. And man's dealings with God's servants are the same as man's dealings with God.

Simone Weil, a French mystic writer (B.1909), points out the sensitivity of this issue. In his view, God is in fact in search of man not man in search of God and the idea that God is in search of man is something very beautiful and utmost sweat feeling and the beginning of its deviation is to think that man is in search for God.

Ayn-al Quzat considers that love is a common religion between God and man and speak of the religion of God. In his view, there is a strong connection between the great love of God for the servants and the small love of the servants for God. He becomes the lover of his God and can swear by God to his lover that God is right in my life for my beauty.

It seems that there is a special type of relationship between God and man, which can be called based on compassion and compassion in the relationship between man and God, or in simple terms, the relationship between man and man. Like the creation of the family of God, this relationship in fact and in general includes the relationship of man with all creatures, the most obvious manifestation of relationship is between man and man.

Today the religious paradigm of John Heck is weakening and we are in a transit phase, the idea of God-centeredness as a common point of religions ignorance of differences and the tendency towards reductionism and relativism is becoming illogical. Each religious tradition is forms in a specific context & only with those is it understandable that there is no Christianity without Christ, no Buddhism without Buddha, and no Islam without

Muhammad (p.b.u.h). Theoretical approaches are also needed in interfaith dialogue, but are not enough. It is better to proceed with a real experienced discourse or at the level of spiritual life and religious experience that religions actually are for. This will happen only when spiritual personalities relying on spirituality & inner side on the religion as well looking beyond of personal belief with very much positive approach towards all religions the dream of respect to others will come true.

Conclusion

The result of all the above mentioned is that the most important forms of the three models of interfaith dialogue are related with approaches of interfaith dialogue and the theoretical approaches. Though those are necessary, but not enough. The religious experience of this event can be practiced by the people of spirituality and by relying on the core teachings of religions and by passing the limitations of personal beliefs with a positive attitude towards all religions and believers.

The thing which will play a key role in a deep and serious dialogues is a kind of deep self-knowledge that may lead to the confession or further reconstruction of freedom of expressions, as seen in the spiritual experiences throughout history and current scenario, which also seem to lead to Compassion and rationality can be intertwined, so it is necessary to have such potentiality to serve interfaith dialogue so that all followers of religions could adapt the same. We need to work together to help our planet to survive. If we would be able to understand the limitations of others, we would see the world from another perspective and live together in peace and tranquillity.

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