

# A DIALOGICAL RESPONSE TO FANATICISM

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**Fanaticism is a phenomenon, which marks the negative psyche of the human society.** It is unpleasant reality of human life. It refers to the sad possibility of the human mind to get obstructed in the way of progress and growth. It underlines the reversed inclination of the mind, to get stuck up and to be fossilized. It proves the utmost degree of human tragedy, even to the point of being abnormal. Fanaticism is the characteristic of the one who loses one's power of concentration in driving the life on, and who eventually gets derailed.

**Fanaticism is a deep attachment to certain theories and practices.** It is an inordinate passion for certain patterns of thought and behavior. It is characterized by an over-enthusiasm for as well as exaggerated conception of certain things. It is a rigid mind-set. It is a great degree of stiffness in habits. It is an uncompromising stand-point of life.

**There are different dimensions of fanaticism.** Ideological fanaticism is a ghetto-thinking, whereas emotional fanaticism is a fix in feelings. Religious fanaticism is getting stuck up in certain religious beliefs, practices and sentiments. Political fanaticism is addiction to power tactics. Gender fanaticism is a conditioning to one particular sex. Stagnant attitude in different areas of life certainly gives rise to various shades of fanaticism.

**There are various factors which make a fanatic.** Generally, the roots of fanaticism are found in fundamentalist outlooks. Holding on to certain fundamentals with an exclusive attitude is the surest way to become a fanatic. Lack of exposure to the multifarious dimensions of the reality of life makes one incapable of coping up with the challenges of the flow of life. The insecurity feeling thus experienced causes a running away towards safe grounds. Thus escapism becomes a reason for fanaticism. Moreover, fanaticism, at times, is the result of unfulfilled desires or unsuccessful plans. It can also be a creation of suffering ill-treatment of any sort.

**A fanatic understands only one thing.** He or she is avowed to a mono-track conception of life. He or she sees life through a part, but claims to comprehend it in its totality. It is as if biting more than what his or her mouth can contain. He or she absolutizes his or her version of life. He or she excludes other approaches to life and

idealizes his or her conviction and wishes to preserve the same. He or she maintains a possessive attitude to life.

**Fanaticism has a vision which is short-sighted.** It seems to have lost the sense of direction in life. With undue narrowing down, the mind reaches a point which is almost dead in thinking. But the passion works as if in intoxication. The confused state of mind makes the fanatic play a defensive game. The inferior feelings take up a role of a superior and the victim tries to dominate over others like an infallible 'big boss'. As a result, fanaticism terrorizes others, violates their convictions and encroaches upon the rights of others. Thus it becomes an over-sensitive issue. With its highly inflammable' nature, fanaticism proves to be complete pathological case.

**The response to the phenomenon of fanaticism is a dialogical treatment.** Dialogue is a gentle way which can liberate the fanatic from his or her ghetto. Dialogue exposes the person to the large world of variety and plurality. Gradually, it occurs to the fanatic believer that there are different possibilities of living one's life. There are different outlooks and beliefs, tastes and likes, experiences and expressions, convictions and practices – all of them equally genuine and valid. There are multifarious streams and strands, traditions and ways existing side by side or traveling together towards the Divine. It is as if the various rivulets join together to make a river and then flow together to join the sea.

**Complementarity is the basic principle of life.** The principle complements the reality of limitation. All forms of creation are limited and they need each other. As the male-female components are like two sides of the same coin, so are all the different perspectives and approaches of life – complimentary to each other. The different religious traditions and faith, languages and expressions are as if a 'mirror' to each other. One sees one's own image in the other and check one's fitness and quality in the reflection of the other. Every spiritual stream gets purified and enriched in the company of the other. So, every living being, especially human being, is invited to live as a 'living complement' to the other. The diverse components of life form a single whole of life.

**Dialogue is the right response to the challenges of life.** Life challenges one to lose, so that one can get something more worthwhile. Precisely, this is what Jesus exhorts. But, fanaticism does not want to lose, and it is no life at all. It is a refusal to live. It is equal to shrinking to nothingness. That is why Kabir cautions: 'be not like stagnant water that gets stained; but be like the flowing water and remain pure'. While blossoming out one's full capacity, one has to reach out in creative openness to the other. While remaining rooted in the genius of one's own given tradition, one has to reach out effectively related to the other traditions. One has to join hands with others to

work together in order to erect a human life in its full capacity. Common human and spiritual values need to be pursued. Belonging to each other and belonging together is human life, worth its name. Getting integrated to one another is the beginning of being. Mutual collaboration and being-in-togetherness is human living in the full sense. Dialogue verbalizes this spiritual attempt at becoming human. Harmony is the ever-delicious fruit “to be relished, while attempting a joint journey of human life. This is the sure way of meriting a life that never ends.

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