

HARMONY AND PEACE

Dr M.D. Thomas

1. HARMONY AND PEACE -- MEANINGS AND NUANCES

1.1. Harmony

The word 'harmony' means 'agreement, coordination, integration, concord, synchronization, balance', etc. The Hindi equivalent 'samanvay' has two parts – 'sam' and 'anvay'. 'Anvay' means 'agreement, conformity, combination, etc. 'Sam' has two meanings – 'samaan roop se' / 'equally' and 'samyak roop se' / 'totally'.

1.2. Peace

The English word 'peace' comes from the Latin 'pax' and the Greek 'eirene'. It is equivalent to the Hebrew 'shalom' and the Arabic 'salaam'. They connote multiple meanings, like 'safety, welfare, prosperity, security, fortune, friendliness', etc. The Anglo-Norman equivalent 'pas' means 'freedom from civil disorder'. The word for peace in many languages is used as a form of 'greeting and farewell', as well. The latter meaning is seen applied to the dead in the phrase 'Rest-In-Peace'.

2. HARMONY AND PEACE -- IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

2.1. Harmony

The reality of 'harmony' has its roots in art and especially music. It is a pleasing combination of notes sounded together to make chords. It is a concord among many notes. It is an orchestra in which different solo players are so conducted as to create a single musical effect of fine sentiments. It is an experience of complete music co-ordinated among singing, playing and dancing, in order to impart a unique sense of togetherness.

In the general context, harmony is a collection of related things agreeing or matching with each other. It emerges from various parts that co-operate or work together for a common purpose and with mutual benefit. The performance of different parts with an equality of importance also creates harmony. Harmony is an integrated arrangement of feelings and thoughts, interests and tastes, aims and opinions, colours and shapes, traditions and practices, streams and strands, etc.

Harmony is a holistic perspective of life. It is a vision that facilitates seeing the entire reality of life at a glance. The reality of harmony, as per the Hindi word 'samanvay', is comprised of five elements, 'sadbhaav (good will), sambhaav (equal footing), sammaan (respect), sehyog (co-operation) and samanvay (harmony)'. These elements are the essential ingredients of harmony. It is a multi-dimensional state of life.

The spirit of harmony is spread over all the details of life. It is like the human body that exists as one body but functions as different parts. Harmony is a mindset that refers to being firmly rooted in one's faith tradition and of being creatively related to other traditions. It is like being a 'rainbow', which is a continuous celebration of beauty in diversity. Such an existence in togetherness is a spiritual quality. What is implied by harmony perspective of life is just this.

2.2. Peace

Peace applies to both individual and social contexts. In the individual context, it is a mental condition that could be described negatively as 'being free from quarrel, disturbance and agitation' and positively as being 'quiet, calm, serene, meditative', etc. It is grounded in positive thinking. Peace of mind refers to mental and spiritual wellness, even amidst discord or stress. Peace is indeed a state of consciousness of bliss and happiness.

In the social context, peace is characterized by respect, justice and goodwill for the other. It is a nonviolent style of life. It is a state of relationship among people. It is an attitude of thinking for the other. It affirms the presence of good relations. It points to the reign of equality and fairness in life. It is wellbeing in togetherness. Such social peace gives meaning to the co-existence of nations and peoples.

3. HARMONY AND PEACE -- DIMENSIONS AND MUTUAL RELATION

3.1. Harmony and Peace -- Dimensions

Both Harmony and Peace have individual and social dimensions. They refer to an experience 'within' the individual human person. This is what is being understood often. Both are social realities, even more so. They are to be searched for 'between' human persons or communities, and broader still are 'among' human persons or communities. They do not refer to dead situations, as in a cemetery. They are living and lively dynamisms.

Harmony and Peace cover all areas of social life. Basically, harmony is between individuals and among individuals. It extends to all sectors of the society, like groups or communities of genders, languages, professions, castes, classes, ideologies, cultures,

nations and communities. Peace emerges from such a harmonious situation. When harmony and peace dwell amidst communities and peoples the human society becomes harmonious and peaceful.

3.2. Harmony and Peace – Mutual Relation

Harmony and Peace are like two sides of the same coin. Harmony is the foundation, peace is the structure above. Harmony is the portion under the soil and peace is the growth above the soil. Harmony is the root, and peace is the stem, branches, fruit and seed. Harmony is the invisible part and peace is the visible part. Harmony is the fruit and peace is the seed. They are complimentary to each other. They need each other and one completes the other. They always go together.

Harmonious living facilitates peaceful co-existence. Peaceful atmosphere accelerates the harmony of life. The state of being well-integrated to one another makes possible the celebration of the consciousness of the state of peace. Both harmony and peace are oriented towards the spiritual meeting point that culminates human life. Harmony and peace together touch upon the divine quality of human life.

4. HARMONY AND PEACE -- POSSIBILITIES AND PROSPECTS

Harmony and peace together ensures a holistic outlook to life. They show the way of unifying various items of life, so as to form a single whole. Wholeness is beauty. With a variety of components fitted together well, they guarantee a sense of completion in life. They bring different components of life in mutual association. They establish a process of continuous sharing of existence and meaning between the given elements.

Making a more harmonious society is the common mission of every individual and community in life. Promoting harmony and peace in social life is the collaborative social action that has to be undertaken by all units of the society. ‘Bahtaa paanee nirmalaa, badaa ganda hoi’, exclaims the great saint and mystic poet Kabir. To be stagnant or to get caught up is to get dirty and stained. To be pure is to be dynamic, like the flowing water. The diverse social units of the human society have to be inclined towards one another, in a continuous process of mutual transformation.

The perspective of harmony and peace necessitates that different faith traditions, ideologies, languages, cultures, etc. do not monopolize one’s own affiliation. They cannot be polarized as ‘mine and yours’. They are gifts of the same Creator to the humans. They are the common cultural heritage of the human society. ‘One is mine in special and others are mine in general’ is the large-hearted attitude that emerges from a ‘we-feeling’ in life. ‘A spirit of togetherness’ is the axle of harmony and peace.

5. HARMONY AND PEACE – ITS DIALOGICAL PROCESS

The word ‘dialogue’ has its root in the Latin ‘dialogus’ or the Greek ‘diálogos’. It means ‘conversation or discourse between two or more persons’. It involves both listening and speaking. It is a process of give and take. It is an exchange of views and experiences. It is the interaction of thoughts and insights. It is the meeting of perceptions and perspectives. It is the sharing of feelings and emotions. It is the interface of deeds and life. It is the crossing point of religious and secular experiences of life.

Dialogue is the natural mode of interaction among living beings in a general way and among human beings in a special way. It is the regular means of on-going communication among people and peoples. It highlights the social character of life, especially of human beings. It believes in and lives a democratic concept of life. It refrains from any encroachment of the other. It is a ‘non-dominating style of life’. It refers to the mutuality of two entities, human or institutional. Dialogue is on equal footing. It does not admit any superior or inferior in its circles.

Dialogue upholds the central dynamics of human life. It would mean ‘being present to the other’. It is like ‘being a mirror to the other’. The associates of dialogue facilitate the checking of the human and spiritual fitness in terms of one another. Dialogue enables the partners in purifying each other, transforming each other and enriching each other. It is the joint process of ‘walking together in life’ and ‘working together in life’. It is a shared pilgrimage to the same divine.

Dialogue is the path to harmony and peace. It necessitates one to open up to the other. It requires one to have a positive attitude of goodwill towards the other. It involves learning from the other, respecting, loving, serving and even promoting the other. It fosters a participatory and interactive approach to life. It fosters mutual relations, mutual conversion and mutual transformation. It is a co-journey of life. It is a shared faith, a shared conviction and a shared spirituality. Dialogue leads to harmony; harmony proceeds from dialogue, and both are complementary. Dialogical process is the surest path to harmony and peace.

6. HARMONY AND PEACE – IN HARMONY OF FAITHS AND IDEOLOGIES

Harmony and peace require that communities and societies search for their common foundations. The humans have a common origin, a common existence and a common destiny. Every individual or community has an individual identity of its own. All the same, it has a shared identity with the other. Ethnicity, language, caste, etc. is the basis for some people to be related with each other. Faith, ideology, profession, nationality, culture, and the like serve as reason for mutual relations for some others. The human nature is the widest foundation for relatedness among peoples. Cross-community relations such as mentioned above facilitate the spirit of harmony and peace.

Faith-based traditions and ideologies are not the private property of the respective community. They belong to each other. They belong together to the Creator. Together they stand and divided they fall.

The ‘rainbow’ that appears in the nature as a rare sight is the best example for ‘an existence in togetherness’. Each colour or shade of colour has its unique character. But together they radiate a beauty that is par excellence. Harmony of faiths and ideologies is the state of mutual relatedness among the different faiths and ideologies. Wellbeing is to be searched for in such a state of bliss.

Faith-based communities hold on to their ‘religious scripture’ as the basic bond of unity. Similarly, the citizens of countries have the ‘Constitution’ of their respective country as their common sacred book. The entire human society has ‘United Nations Charter’ as the universal code of behaviour. The fundamental duty as citizens of the same country and as human beings of the same society is a superior bond than that of the holy book of a respective religious community or a country. Real sacredness is in larger application and in greater contribution to harmony and peace.

7. HARMONY AND PEACE -- THE SPIRITUAL CROWNING OF LIFE

‘Unity in diversity’ and ‘beauty in difference’ is the characteristic note of the Asian and especially Indian culture. This is a pluralistic vision that facilitates a spiritual journey in human life. This vision affirms a firm ‘rootedness’ in one’s inherited traditions of faith and other realities. It has an essential ‘relatedness’ with other traditions, as well. Both together lead the spiritual journey towards its final destination of harmony and peace.

Faith and other affiliations cannot survive like islands, especially in the increasingly globalizing world of today. They cannot afford to attempt a travel like parallel lines. Pretending to be independent of the other in a selfish manner is equally a disoriented mindset, as being one-sidedly dependent on the other like a slave. All the units are indeed inter-dependent. Multi-dimensionality and networking are catchphrases of

today. The sense of completeness or perfection is possible in ‘the spirit of communion of faith or other traditions’. That is the path towards experiencing harmony and peace.

Harmony and Peace is not a ready-made product. They are a combined ‘process’ of human life. They are a ‘shared journey’ towards the highest human accomplishment. When harmony with the divine, with the human and with the natural is attained, peace spontaneously occurs. Peace, along with harmony, is a spiritual quality. Harmony and peace together is the living symbol of the spiritual communion with the divine. Harmony and peace together is sublime meaning and fulfillment of human life. Harmony and peace together is the spiritual crowning of human life.

Dr M.D. Thomas

Founder Director, Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies

Floor 1, A 128, Sector 19, Dwarka, New Delhi 110075

Tel.: 09810535378 (p), 08847925378 (p), 011-45575378 (o)

Email: mdthomas53@gmail.com (p), ihps2014@gmail.com (o)

Website: www.mdthomas.in (p), www.ihpsindia.org (o)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/mdthomas53>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mdthomas53>

Academia.edu: <https://independent.academia.edu/MDTHOMAS>