

# Why All Religions Are Not the Same

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It is often said by some Hindu gurus and leaders that all religions are the same. But is this really the case? Naturally, anyone who studies religion can see many similarities between them. And if we are talking about getting closer to God and increasing our understanding and love for God, then what religion is not trying to do that? Who cannot go to a church, mosque, or temple and worship and bow to God in prayer? It is what many of us do no matter where we may be. So, what is the difference? Are not all religions the same?

## SIMILAR FACTORS IN ALL RELIGIONS

We can all recognize how many of the moral principles that we follow are observed and recommended by all religions. For example: no matter whether we talk about Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism, or Zoroastrianism, they all recommend daily prayer. In Islam they are regulated to pray five times a day, while in Hinduism they chant the gayatri mantra three times a day. And in all religions they pray any time of day. All of these religions believe that God or the Absolute Truth is ultimately one, except Buddhism in which some sects do not except the soul or a God. They also believe that we are spiritual beings, and that we should become sincerely devoted to and develop love for God. They also recommend giving alms and doing welfare work for society. They also accept the idea of meditating or calling out the holy names of God, fasting, and remembering God, especially on their holy days.

All of these religions also advise pilgrimage, going to the holy places that are important to them. They also advise that followers be humble, honest, and tolerant in their religious practice, and compassionate to all living beings. Thus, several of these religions outline the ideal of being vegetarian. They all recommend, or at least advise the decrease of the consumption of alcohol and intoxicants, as well as the restriction of gambling. Monogamy in marriage is often considered the highest standard, and divorce is never recommended or is discouraged. Thus, there are many principles that are common amongst all religions. So, what is the difficulty?

The point is that it is often soothing to try to show how we could all live peacefully if we all focused on our similarities. Who in their right mind would not want that? It is certainly much easier than focusing on our differences. The core of each religion, meaning its ultimate purpose, is similar to others in that they all promote the increase in one's devotion to God, being kind and compassionate to all, and give the principles to follow to live a good and moral existence. And for those who recognize

these similarities, they all can easily come together and worship God in unity, and respect one another and their traditions. Yet, to actually find this kind of a situation with mutual respect seems quite rare. Not only do those of various religions separate themselves from others, but even within the same religion there can be many different sects that do not agree, or even fight to the death with one another. So, it seems that many religions do not agree with each other on the finer details, and at best may succeed at only tolerating one another while being quick to criticize the other. Quite honestly, it can be said that some of the most unsettling and warring factors created in this world are caused by religions and their attitudes and views toward one another. History has shown that the major focus of most wars has been the differences people perceive in one another's religion. For example, the blood that has been spilt in the name of Jesus or Allah is inestimable. So, is there any chance that real harmony can exist between the various religions of the world?

Two factors that keep the world from being united is the presumption of racial superiority, and the desire to conquer and convert. This means that often times the status of religions is viewed by how much territory it controls, and how many converts it has made. If this is how religions view their success, then there is no way in hell that harmony will ever be created by religion. In fact, it turns them into nothing different than political parties vying for influence. Thus, they create hell on earth rather than being able to bring in the Kingdom of God, as some of them say they can.

The only way to breakthrough the barriers of distinction that seem to exist between us is with love. However, that love cannot be love of the body or one's own society. It has to be better and higher than that. It has to be a spiritual love for all beings. The *Dhammapada* (5-6) explains: "For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule. The world does not know that we must all come to an end here; but those who know it, their quarrels cease at once."

Therefore, it is only the path of genuine spirituality that can bring us to a level higher than what ordinary religion offers. It has to be based on the transcendental principles of spiritual realization, not merely on the basics of moral foundations. And if you look into the teachings of most religions, such a lofty view of spirituality is not easily found. Thus, there is no question that they are not all the same.

### **SARVA DHARMA SAMBHAVA**

Another part of this issue, at least amongst the Hindus, is the phrase "Sarva Dharma Sambhava," which many people take to mean that all Dharmas or religions are the same, or are equal, or that they all are merely different paths that lead to the same goal. Thus, with this line of thought, any religion is as good as any other. When viewing the essence of religions, we may find this to be a fair assumption, with differences only in

their outer superficialities. So, while using this form of logic, it should not matter if one is a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jew, etc. But this is also a mistranslation if we analyze the phrase carefully.

We could say the same thing in regard to foods—that they are all the same. But are they really? Are they the same in every way? They are the same in that they are food, and the goal of food is to satisfy and nourish the body. So, are they all the same? Some food is Chinese, Italian, Mexican, French, Indian, etc. Plus, they are made using different ingredients, they come from different cultures, they have different tastes, and different effects on the body, and so on. There are specific variations which distinguish them in ways that make some people prefer certain foods over others. Thus, there is no way they are all exactly the same.

So, when it comes to understanding the meaning of Dharma, we have to be aware of its Sanskrit definition. The root of the word *dharma* comes from *dhri*, which means to uphold or maintain. The Sanskrit says *dharayati iti dharmaha*, which translates as “dharma is that which upholds.” However, not only what is supported is Dharma, but that which does the supporting is also Dharma, *dhriyate iti dharmaha*. So, Dharma consists of both the force that sustains as well as what is sustained. It can also be said that there is the path of Dharma as well as its conclusion, the object of Dharma, or what we are seeking, meaning the ultimate goal of life. So, Dharma is the means or path as well as the goal.

Dharma is also said to be the force which maintains the universe. Where there is Dharma there is harmony and balance individually, socially, and intergalactically. Therefore, the path of Dharma brings about the harmony and contentment that is also another aspect of what we are seeking. In this way, we want harmony inwardly, in our own consciousness, but we also cannot have individual peace unless there is harmony or cooperation socially, amongst the masses. Without that, no one can have peace, unless you are completely outside the effects of society.

The practice of Dharma should be done not out of compulsion but out of love due to the perception of the Supreme in all living beings. With this motivation, Dharma can assist in preventing injury to others and treating each other respectfully. Dharma also means righteous conduct. This includes following social laws and proper moral activity and behavior. It encourages truthfulness of thought, word and deed. The point of which is to reach the goal of Dharma.

Dharma also means truth. So, we follow the path of Dharma to free ourselves from illusion and reach the ultimate Truth, which is the topmost reality, the spiritual strata. The Absolute Truth means the final philosophical goal and end of all knowledge, or Vedanta, which is God, the Supreme Being. So, when we want to attain liberation from material existence, then it becomes much easier to follow the path of Dharma and overcome the temptations of the temporary

material world. Then we can let go of the illusory objects that are, in fact, hurdles on the path to Truth and God, and happiness in general.

Furthermore, doing what should not be done is called *vidharma*, which is a type of *adharmā* or nondharmic activity. The conclusion, therefore, is that if we want happiness and peace we must learn how to live according to the path of Dharma. So, where there is no Dharma, there is disharmony and a state of being that is out of balance. And socially it means that without Dharma, there is a lack of cooperation, along with escalating quarrel and fighting. When we act against the law of Dharma, we disrupt the very harmony and cooperation that we want. In other words, we create a life for ourselves in which there is stress, confusion, discontent, and frustration, and even war. And when we feel this way, that becomes our contribution to the general social condition. It is the exact opposite of what we wish to attain. Thus, to live a life outside of Dharma means to work against ourselves. Therefore, we can conclude that if each and every religion really had Dharma as the basis of its teachings, and helped spread Dharma, there would be no conflict. But as we can plainly see, this is not the case.

With this analysis in mind, there are a few questions we should ask. For example:

1. How many religions really offer true Dharma to its followers?
2. How many really uphold the principle of Dharma within its teachings?
3. How many truly offer mutual respect for others, even those who are outside their own religion?
4. How many actually teach the ways to provide balance and harmony throughout society, rather than dividing people into false classifications, such as those who are “saved” and those who are hell-bound, kafirs, infidels, disbelievers, etc?
5. How many so-called religions actually spread *adharmā* or nondharmic activities, such as the needless killing of useful animals like cows and bulls, or the Brahman class of society who help preserve the Dharmic traditions, or who try to unnecessarily criticize other religions in their attempt to gain converts?

This makes it more obvious that not all religions promote Dharma, nor live up to the saying of “Sarva Dharma Sambhava.” And understanding this should cut down on the confusion that makes some people think that all religions are the same, or are equal.

What this phrase actually refers to are the other sects within the Vedic fold. Sanatana-dharma or the Vedic path has various schools of Vedanta; including Vaishnavism, Saivism, Saktism, etc. It has various creeds, and the Vedic path accommodates all types of men. This is the glory and liberality of the Dharmic process which provides spiritual guidance for all. Thus, no one is considered a non-believer or hell-bound when they are only taking up different levels of their spiritual quest through some aspect of the Vedic teachings.

Therefore, Dharma means an inclusive spiritual process, not an exclusive system which considers only certain people being eligible to participate, or that only those who follow the dogma of a certain religion are eligible for heaven or the promised land. Therefore, Dharma in the phrase of “Sarva Dharma Sambhava” really means the different schools of thought, lineages, or *paramparas* within the Vedic fold, those that actually know and contain the principles of true Dharma. It does not mean that every religion throughout the world is the same or propagates true Dharma or deep spirituality. This is something we need to clearly understand.

A religion may indeed have some level of Dharma in it, and similarities they all should share, as we have previously analyzed. But you may have to cut through so many layers of externals before you reach it. These layers may include forms of politics, prejudice toward outsiders or “nonbelievers” of other religions, or ethnic superiority, or the feeling that they are the only true followers of the only true faith, the only ones who are really saved or who understand the teachings given by God at the exclusion of everyone else, and so on. Somewhere in all that there may be some genuine Dharma, but by the time you reach it, and many never do, there may already be too many corruptions or perversions in the teachings to see the core of what it was meant to be, unless you have been educated in a system that allows you to know and recognize genuine spirituality beforehand, which also is rarely the case. Thus, the differences between religions can be glaringly obvious, and are what many people cling to, and are held more firmly than some people would care to admit.

Furthermore, if a religion has too much *rajo-guna* or *tamo-guna*, meaning too much of the mode of passion and ignorance in it, then it keeps a person bound to that level of consciousness, imprisoned by the dictates of a mere belief system or a rigid dogma rather than a spiritual process that can bring a person to the ultimate freedom of spiritual self-realization. This is the danger. In this case, such a religion certainly cannot bring one to the level of *sattva-guna* or to the mode of goodness from which one can progress to the level of *sudha-sattva*, or the quality of pure goodness of the spiritual dimension. It is no longer a process for reaching total freedom up to and including *moksha*, or liberation from all material existence, but instead keeps one bound to the realm of *samsara*, repeated births and deaths in the material creation regardless of how pious that person may be.

### **ALL RELIGIONS ARE REALLY NOT THE SAME**

So, let’s face the truth, in spite of many similarities in their core purpose, each religion offers very different views of themselves, of other religions, of those who do not follow their particular path, as well as different views of God and the purpose of life.

Plus, they are often quick to create and show deep boundaries between each other at the slightest provocation.

One of the most important points is that if we look closely, we can easily recognize that each religion certainly brings their followers to different levels of understanding and consciousness, both materially and spiritually. Which level of consciousness they attain will make a great deal of difference in how they perceive themselves in relation to others. They will have different ideas on what is their spiritual identity, on who or what is God, how to please Him, and what His attitude is toward His followers and who are not considered to be His followers, at least according to the dictates of that particular religion.

Furthermore, like I said, some Hindu gurus say that all religions are the same, but you really never hear the authorities of other religions say that. Who among the Christians, Muslims, Jews, or even the Buddhists say that all religions are the same? Some big preachers from non-Hindu religions even vehemently disagree with that point and not only disrespect those of other religions, but say they are all condemned to hell in the eyes of their God. Well, isn't that a soothing thought? This is also why an increasing number of people are giving up the conventional forms of religion and taking up what can be called spirituality, which can be more personal and not tied to the dictates of a dogma. Why would someone do this? Obviously, they want to continue in their own development without being a part of all the trouble, divisiveness, and quarrel that comes from holding an allegiance toward one particular religion. Freedom to think, ask, inquire, investigate, and experience what we want in our spiritual quest certainly begins to make more sense than to be tied to the obligation of accepting a dogma in order to be accepted by the church or mosque or institution for getting to heaven, if you believe in such a thing.

Another point is that some people think the Hindu sages of old said that truth is one, but the paths to it are many. So, again we have a misunderstanding that keeps some Hindus thinking all religions are equal. However, once again that is not accurate. The real saying is "ekam sat, vipra bahuda vadanti," that truth is one, but the names for it are many. This means something else entirely. Thus, it becomes obvious that different religions also prescribe different ways to reach God, or attain heaven, or whatever it is they promise people. And each religion thinks that they offer the one true and only way, as if they have a patent or copyright on the process and teachings, as if God spoke only one time to one person and no one else, and now that person is the only representative of God that we must all follow, or go to eternal damnation. Here again is only mankind projecting their own weaknesses into their conception of God. And when that is the case, there is no end to the variations or differences in religions.

To get a better idea, let us compare some of the differences in religions that we can easily recognize.

## **DIFFERENT FACTORS IN VARIOUS RELIGIONS**

- One book or many. Here we can start with the fact that the Christians have their Bible, composed of a variety of books, divided into the Old and New Testament. Then we have the Koran for the Muslims, and a few other books for the Jews. While in the Vedic system we practically have a whole library that takes a person through many levels of understanding the Absolute Truth. These include the *Vedas*, like the *Rig*, *Atharva*, *Yajur*, and *Atharva*, then the *Upanishads*, *Vedanta-sutras*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* of which the classic *Bhagavad-gita* is a chapter, then the 18 major and 18 minor *Puranas*, the various *Agamas*, and others. Thus, there are differences in the religions from the start.
  - One savior or many. Again we see that the Vedic system provides a variety of teachers, gurus, prophets, as well as *avatars* of God to help guide humanity at different times throughout history. While in the conventional religions there is one God, one savior, one main messenger and no one else, and you either believe in him, or you are as good as condemned.
  - One God or many forms. In the Vedic tradition there are many forms of God, many descensions or *avatars* of God, all of whom show the pastimes, characteristics and qualities of the one Supreme Being. But in other religions, they do not accept this. In fact, they do not even know any descriptive form of God. You ask them what God looks like, and they are not sure. They may say something about His character, but even very little of that. And Christianity says that God appears only as Jesus, or maybe a great cloud over a mountain, a dove, or something in a figurative sense. Islam, on the other hand, does not present any form of God, nor does Judaism.
- One God, or Brahman, Paramatama and Bhagavan. In the Vedic system, these are the three aspects of God, namely the all pervasive Brahman, spiritual energy; the Paramatma or localized expansion known as the Lord in the Heart or Supersoul; then Bhagavan, the Supreme Personality. Whereas in Christianity they are known as the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, though the meanings of which are not as profound or specific as that given in the Vedic descriptions. So, from the start, the concept of God is not the same. In this way, the Vedic culture establishes one Absolute Truth that appears in many forms, whereas the western and middle eastern religions say there is only one personal God with only one form, of which they are not sure what that is.
- In the Vedic system God can expand and appear in the localized form of the Deity in the temple, whereas the western and middle-eastern religions condemn Deity worship.
- Dharmists (those who follow Sanatana-dharma, the Vedic path) are usually very tolerant of other religions and can recognize the spiritual truths

wherever they may be, in whatever form. Many Christians and Muslims may also be tolerant, but many are not, and are quick to criticize those of other religions since they cannot recognize spiritual truth so easily in other forms. One of their criticisms they often use is that if it is not of their religion, then it must be of the devil. Where is the logic in this?

• Dharmists often welcome other religions, as in the way we have seen so many that have settled in India and made it their home, such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, the Parsis, Jews, Zoroastrians, Sikhs, Baha'i, etc. While Christians and Muslims, on the other hand, have a vast history of destroying any other culture or people in whichever land they invaded. This is a profound difference that history cannot deny. Intolerance kills.

• So, we can see the liberality, kindness and openness of Dharmists, yet in any Muslim country, they allow but one religion to flourish, and any other religion must practice undercover, or they are persecuted and driven out or even thrown into prison, just as we are seeing many Hindus and Christians being driven out of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, etc.

• The Vedic system says there are various ways to progress toward God, but the western and middle-eastern monotheistic religions generally say there is only their way to God.

- The Vedic system says that all is God, while other religions say God is far away and takes great endeavor and approval through the church to reach God.

- The Vedic tradition says that one can take many lifetimes to attain the spiritual dimension or reach God, while others says there is but one life to reach perfection or go to eternal hell.

- This brings us to the point wherein the Vedic system says there are numerous temporary heavenly or hellish realms that we may have to work through, based on our pious or impious deeds, while western religions says there is but one heaven or one eternal hell.

- Vedic Dharma says that a person can ask many and any questions to understand spiritual truths, while the western religions curb many questions regarding its dogma, and say you are a doubting person if you ask too many questions.

- Eastern religions explain that one's situations in life are due to karma for which a person has to take responsibility, while the western religions have little philosophy to clarify one's good or bad circumstances in life.



• The Vedic spiritual path explains that all beings have souls, while the western religions say that only humans have souls.

• The Vedic tradition has always accommodated diversity, while western religions say that you must fit in or face excommunication, and another says even death.

• The Vedic Dharmists have always spread their culture through the use of philosophy and spiritual purity, while the western religions have often spread through the use of force, fear, intimidation, and by criticizing and threatening all other religions, which is but materialism and ego (“my religion is best”). We can especially see this when Muslims have demonstrated in London in their campaign for ruling the world over everyone else, with signs that said death to non-Muslims and that Islam will rule the world, and so on. Or when some fanatics try to commit suicide while blowing up themselves and as many people of other religions as possible, or even other sects of their own religion, thinking that is a way to get to heaven. Thus, we can see different views within each religion and the numerous sects.

• Another difference is how Dharmists use the Sanskrit phrase “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”, which means the whole universe is all one family. This shows the spirituality of each other and how it is important that we all cooperate and work together. Yet, we can see that Dharmists have rarely received the same respect from those of other religions, even those who have settled in India. How is this an example of all religions being one? Yet, if Hindus stand up and defend themselves and their culture in their own homeland against the conversion tactics of Christians, or the violence of Muslims with similar strength, they are often labeled as saffron communalists or extremists. It is as if to be a good Dharmist or Hindu, you must lay your head down so others may cut it off, while those of other religions can do as they like.

• The fact is that Christianity and Islam will never agree that they are one with Vedic culture, Hinduism, or that they are the same, or even part of the same family. They say they are the only one true faith, and all others, especially Hindus, worship Satan and devils, and are in darkness and must be “saved”.

• Thus, in what other religion do you find the “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” concept? Where do you find that any other religion tries to offer the spiritual vision of seeing the unity between us all? They may promote that there is unity between all those of the *same* faith, but they do not value those of *other* faiths, unless they are seen as potential converts. In fact, Christians and Muslims often disdain those who worship differently, even when in the different sects of the same religion. What kind of religions are these? Why do they not also advocate seeing the Divine or spiritual identity within all regardless of religion?

• Vedic tradition does not have a particular founder of the culture. Whereas there is a specific founder in most conventional religions with a clear history of how it developed and from where it originated.

• The origins of Vedic culture predates recorded history and certainly predates any other of the prominent religions that exist today, such as Christianity (2000 years old) and Islam (almost 1400 years old), and is not a response to some issue or quarrel. It has stood on its own for many centuries before the ones that now say they are the only way, or that you are lost and going to hell if you do not convert to their way of thinking. Since when do they have the audacity to say such a thing? Since when do they justify their hostility toward any other religion? They are but recent inventions compared to Vedic culture and the many older indigenous traditions around the world.

• How is it that western religions, which are all relatively new, all think nonbelievers will go to hell? Or think that Hinduism came from the Bible, when it is obvious that Hinduism predates Christianity by hundreds if not thousands of years? Dharmists / Hindus do not think like this.

• All religions have validity by what they offer, but how many are ready to admit that? How many are ready to show respect to other traditions? If they really did, it would take away from their reason for conversion campaigns. For example, when will Christianity or Islam admit that they are not the exclusive religion, the only one authorized or approved by God? When will they admit that other religions also have validity and spiritual knowledge to offer? If they cannot, then their view is but an immature form of egotistical materialism.

• Hindus/Dharmists are always seeking higher levels of spiritual truth, either by knowledge or realization and experience, whereas the monotheistic religions say they already have the truth.

• Vedic knowledge is often in harmony with science, whereas the western and middle-eastern religions are often contrary to science, keeping their own dogma no matter what. €

• Vedic culture accepts reincarnation and karma, but western and middle-eastern religions do not accept it and say that we all have but one life to attain spiritual perfection by faith, or meet our place in eternal hell.

• Vedic tradition says you were born divine and must merely awaken to that divinity, while western religions say we were born sinners or “in sin” and must work to be rectified and saved from our sins.

• Vedic followers accept responsibility for their actions as part of their own karma, while the western religions say it is the devil that tempts them to do

evil things. Or even if they succumb to their temptations they are saved by the blood of Jesus, who is their savior, or they are saved by their faith in Allah.

• In the Vedic tradition there is no supreme evil force or devil, or prince of darkness, though there are certainly evil beings that exist in both the gross material realm and the subtle realm. Whereas in conventional western religions there is a devil or Satan that is the cause of the evil in the world, and who in this way fights with God.

• Vedic Dharmists accept that the means for liberation or freedom from continued material life is by education, following a spiritual path, and reaching spiritual or God realization, while conventional western religions feel that their savior and faith in him is the only way to reach heaven, which may include baptism, going to church, reading the Bible, etc. Therein, liberation is promised by Jesus, while in the Vedic premise, liberation must be earned by the individual.

• Dharmists can view everything as spiritual. Thus, their path becomes more than a religion but a way of life. While conventional western religions often divide what is religious and what is secular.

• Vedic Dharmists often try to work in unity with nature, but the West and western religions often want to control nature and take whatever they want from her in whatever way they want, often causing trouble and imbalance in the process.

• The Vedic tradition offers many, many names of God, such as found in the *Vishnu-sahasranama* or “Thousand Names of Vishnu” which are based on His activities, pastimes and many characteristics. Whereas in other religions His name is only a title, or is limited to Jehovah, Yaweh, or Allah, or the unnamable. This shows a most limited understanding of the real character and nature of the Supreme.

• The philosophical purview of the Vedic tradition is wide, and can include the Purva Mimamsa of Jaimini, the Uttara Mimamsa of Vyasa, Vaisheshika of Kanada, Nyaya of Gotama, Samkhya of Kapila, Yoga of Patanjali, Vedanta of Vyasa, and others such as Vaishnavas, Shaivites, Tantrics, and Brahmanandis. Though these are all schools of thought with their own followers, they are all still part of the Vedic and Dharmic fold. While in Christianity or Islam there is only a rigid view or dogma to be followed, whether it makes clear sense or not, and if there is any difference of opinion, then that person or persons become forced out or become a separate sect that disagrees with everyone else.

• Dharmists believe that hellish punishment can exist after death if one is too evil, but that it is temporary after one becomes rehabilitated. However, in Christianity or Islam they feel a person has but one chance to reach heaven or hell, and that is also eternal with no chance of rehabilitation. This seems to give a

harsh view of God and fly in the face of any idea that God is merciful and full of unconditional love.

## CONCLUSION

We could go on describing such differences, but this should be enough to make our point clear. You could also say that these differences listed above are but rifts between the ways of religion as we know it today and spirituality. The core purpose of each is meant to be the same, which is to help a person connect with the spiritual dimension or bind themselves to God. But conventional religion seems to have taken a different route, based on the desire to conquer, convert and control. This is much like a political movement that gives the people just enough information to make them think they are making progress in the right direction, but still withholds the most essential knowledge in order to keep them under the influence of the institution. Religion, thus, seems to expect people to blindly accept whatever is given or forced on them without question. Spirituality, on the other hand, is the freedom a person can exercise in his or her search for the spiritual path that provides the lessons, knowledge and experience that is most suitable for that person's inner development in this particular lifetime.

Spirituality is basically an internal process, which is emphasized in yoga and meditation. Spirituality is often more personal and individual than the way we see religion today, though it is sometimes shared in groups such as on holy days when large gatherings may take place. Nonetheless, it does not depend so much on outer customs, although external rituals may be done for the development of internal changes or other benefits. Furthermore, anyone practicing religion is usually considered a religious person, but is not necessarily spiritual if he or she is not able to recognize the spiritual essence within that is shared by one and all. If a person cannot recognize the spiritual identity of oneself and others, then he is not spiritual, no matter how religious he may pose himself to be. This is one of the main differences between ordinary religious practice and genuine spirituality. And this is something that should be kept in mind.

In conclusion, it is a great disservice and a misjudgment to say that all religions are equal, or are the same. Actually, they all take you to different levels of consciousness, different views of God, varying levels of understanding, assorted reasons for life, and dissimilar views of each other or of ethnic groups. In fact, in this way, some religions perpetuate what is really a materialistic view, the bodily concept of life, which also emphasizes the ego and one's status or position compared with others. This gives way to views such as "I'm better than you, my religion is superior to yours, my God is better than yours." This latter point certainly leads to disharmony between us. It leads to quarrel, friction, persecution of others who are different, and even religious wars, which the world has seen so much of, and which is not the purpose of real religion. This is not the way to reach the goal of life.

Thus, the reality is that religions and spiritual paths are not all the same, and it behooves us to understand and distinguish what is genuine spirituality or Dharma, and learn how to follow it to attain the inner realizations that make all the difference between mundane or faith-based religion and that which will take us to a higher consciousness and perception of who and what we really are. This is the real purpose, rather than merely being sold a level of self-glorification or pride for considering ourselves to belong to a particular religion that gives us the favor from who or what we think is God, and, thus, privileging ourselves to think that we are automatically “saved” simply because we “believe”, and are above all others who are not “delivered” in such a way. That is another egotistical conception that should have been overcome and left behind long ago if and when we follow a real spiritual path that uplifts us above and beyond such a view. It is only at that time when we might have the possibility for genuine religious harmony.