



A MEETING OF DIVERSE SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS IN INDIA

Promoting Human Values & Inter-religious Harmony

September 20 - 21, 2014, New Delhi

A REPORT



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1st PLENARY SESSION

Theme: "Inter-Religious Understanding and Human Values"

- 1) Fostering inter-religious harmony and understanding
- 2) Steps to prevent violence and promoting non-violence through dialogue
- 3) To explore setting up of mechanism by religious traditions to provide mediation, advice and help in zones of conflict
- 4) Promoting such human values as kindness and compassion, tolerance and forgiveness

Moderator: Karma Paljor, Business Editor, CNN IBN

Resource person: Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Former Governor of West Bengal

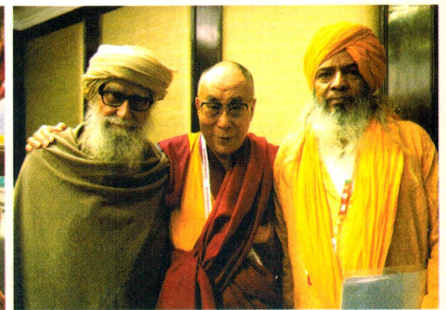
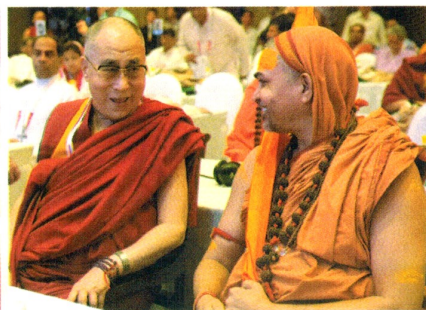
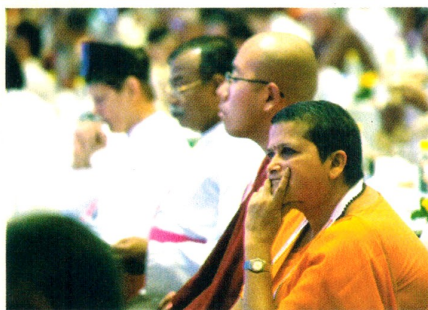
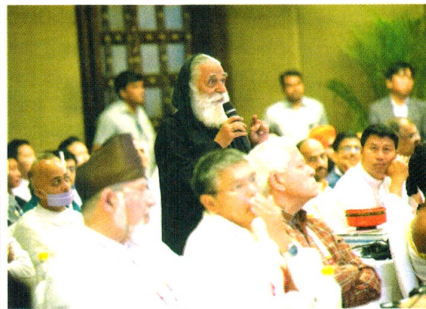
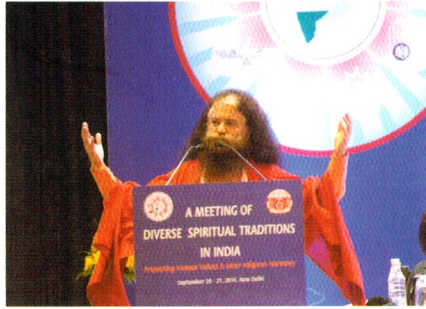
Panelists:

- 1) Swami Chidanand Saraswati
- 2) Maulana Wahiduddin Khan
- 3) Dr. Paul Dhinakaran
- 4) Karmyogi Peethadheesh Swasti Shri Ravindra Keerti Swami
- 5) Sheikhul Masheikh Dewan Syed Zainul Abedin Ali Khan
- 6) T.K. Lochen Tulku Rinpoche
- 7) Dr. Shernaz Cama



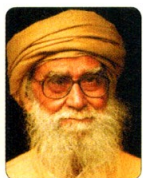
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INTER-RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING AND HUMAN VALUES

1st Plenary Session



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan:

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim! Sisters and brothers! According to my study there are differences between religions. This is a fact. But again, I will say that these differences are not evil.

Evil is created by politicians, not by religions. All those fights in the name of religion are waged by politicians. There is a very relevant reference in the Quran: "*Lakum dinukum wa liya din.*" (109:6) It means that if there is difference between my religion and your religion, don't take it as an evil, but try to manage it, try to adjust with it. Then there is a saying of the Prophet that gives us the reason. That is, "*Ikhtilafu ummati rahmatun linnas.*" It means that difference of opinion among people is a blessing. Now why is difference a blessing? That is a question. Now, according to my study and according to my experience, differences always give us a point of discussion, differences gives us subject for dialogue. And, discussion and dialogue is a process that leads to intellectual development. It awakens our mind, it enhances the thinking process and it is a fact that these things always lead to intellectual development and creative thinking.

Once I was participating in an international seminar in some European country. All the participants were secular scholars. During a discussion, I asked a question to a scholar: "What do you think about differences or dissent?" He said: "We take differences or dissent as a blessing. We take it as a point of discussion. It only enhances the development of academic process." So, if difference is a blessing in secular discipline, then why is it not a blessing in religious discipline?

All the politicians have adopted a very accepted principle, that is, co-existence. All the nations have adopted this principle of peaceful co-existence. Then, why not among religious people? We have to accept this principle, that is, peaceful co-existence.

This is the best way to manage the differences between different religions.

I am a religious person. I am a practicing Muslim, but I can say that I never felt any hate against anyone. Some people say that, for example, Jews are enemies of Islam. I say: "No, Jews are human beings." Here, I can refer to a very relevant event. When the Prophet of Islam was living in Madina, there were some Jewish tribes at that time. One day, he saw the funeral procession of a Jew and stood up in its respect. Some people asked, "O Prophet, he was a Jew, why are you giving him so much respect?" He said, "*Alaysat nafsan?*" (Was he not a human being?)

So, according to Islamic teaching and according to the Prophet's teaching, every human being is a human being, he is created by God, just like myself. So there is no room for hate in Islam, there is no room for violence in Islam, there is no room for fighting in Islam. There is a very guiding verse in the Quran: "*As-sulh khair,*" which means peace is the best. (4:128) So, according to Islam, peace is the summum bonum, peace is the greatest good. Why? Where there is peace, there are activities, there is development, and there is progress. All kinds of progress can be carried out in a peaceful atmosphere.

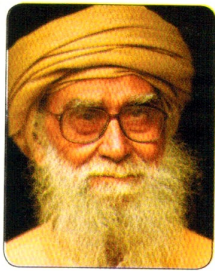
So I think that we should not try to eliminate the differences, but try to manage the differences. This is the only solution. Thank you. ❖

Karma Paljor: Thank you sir. Our next speaker is Dr. Paul Dhinakaran. He has an MBA, was the first student of the University of Madras to earn a Ph.D. in Management Science at the age of 27. Today, he spearheads the Karunya University that was founded in 1986 with a divine vision to raise leaders in technology with high spiritual values and commitment to society.



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MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is an Islamic scholar who presents Islam as an ideology of peace and spirituality in a language to address the modern mind. He is the recipient of several national and international awards such as the Demiurgus Peace International Award, the title of Ambassador of Peace, Padam Bhushan, Rajiv Gandhi Sadbhavna Award, National Integration Award, Communal Harmony Award, among others. Georgetown University's 500 Most Influential Muslims of 2009, named him Islam's Spiritual Ambassador to the World. The Maulana undertakes interfaith efforts to present to the world the true peaceful, tolerant face of Islam in the modern idiom. Well-versed in both classical Islamic learning and modern science, he has translated the Quran with commentary in English, Hindi, Urdu and Arabic and has authored

more than 200 books on prophetic wisdom and peaceful co-existence in a multi-ethnic society. His latest book is *The Prophet of Peace – The Teachings of Prophet Muhammad*. The Maulana set up the Islamic Centre (Al Markazul Islami) in 1970 and launched its monthly journal *Al-Risala* in Urdu, English and later in Hindi to prepare a team of Ambassadors of Peace. To spread the message of peace to the world and to carry his mission forward, he established the Centre for Peace and Spirituality International in 2001.