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## **Interfaith inclusion**

I HAVE noticed that there are more and more Indian holy people participating in interfaith conferences that I attend.

Therefore, there is a great need to understand the philosophy of Hinduism as Indians take their place in the American landscape.



I believe Muslim leaders are slow in interfaith activities. This hurts the image of Islam on the national and international level, since Muslims are only presenting Islam as a part of the Abrahamic tradition and not as a message to all humanity.

India has the largest democracy, with 150 million Muslims blended into its culture from the last 1,000 years. The kind of Islam that India has nurtured is full of pluralism and diversity. It has absorbed the good that the Indian philosophy had to offer.

But in America, the question that comes up very often is: What position does Islam take on religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Confucianism?

Those faiths are embraced by nearly half the world's population, with deep-rooted philosophies and a very glorious and progressive cultural past.

According to the Quran — the Muslim holy scripture — there are prophets in all religions and in their own respective countries. A Just, Merciful and Compassionate God does not play favorites. And the God of Equality, Righteousness and Love has disseminated his message to people outside the Abrahamic

traditions for ages. Unfortunately, this comes as complete astonishment to the radicals among Muslims.

The religious Muslim leadership had collectively been depriving Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Confucians of Allah's Mercy and good Guidance.

The leadership has erroneously preached that after the coming of Prophet Muhammad, all other religions are null and void, and that the Quran supersedes all other religious scriptures — when the fact is: That Quran came to bring the “ignorant Arabs” on par with other revealed faiths – because the Arabs had never had an Arabian Prophet nor a revelation in Arabic, The Quran. (Ref. 5:19,26: 192 to 200, 32:3 & 41:44). This interpretation lays the groundwork for religious diversity, pluralism and tolerance.

The radicals also maintain that all the previous scriptures have been changed. The bankruptcy of their argument is such that most of them have not read the other scriptures.

Prophet Muhammad preached, "To every people was sent an Apostle in their own language and in their own country( Ref: 10:47, 14:4 & 16:36), and that more than 124,000 Prophets (infinite) have been sent by The Merciful God from the beginning of human life."

Most countries have constitutions that have enacted laws making it illegal to discriminate against anyone based on their birth, religion, ethnicity and national origin, and here we have radical religious leaders discounting and belittling all other religions.

Muslim religious leaders need reforms. Read the scriptures through the lenses of modern global community with values of freedom, justice, equality and mercy. Embrace teachings that are full of pluralism, diversity and peaceful co-existence. Research diligently to find solutions for the ever-growing world population destined to live on one earth.

Find scientific solutions to the global disaster of polluted rivers emptying into oceans, poisonous air hanging over urban areas, and depleting resources, including food and water.

If we do not think as a global community, then we may kill ourselves through religious wars based on bias, bigotry and hatred.

For too long, we looked to religious leadership for guidance which is not coming. I think it is time for the laity from all faiths to get together and realize we do not need the religious leadership to tell us where we are heading.

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