

Religious fanaticism in a multicultural society
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Religious fanaticism is a very real issue to deal with, as many fail to realise that there are such tendencies within oneself without even knowing it.

There are many complications when religious fanaticism is being practiced whereby it silently weakens unity, togetherness and harmony, and it is all the more damaging in a multi-cultural nation.

Religious fanaticism has a potential to create a mental block to understand and appreciate the religions of others and only emphasises the self-religiousness of one's own, and this will eventually lead to biased actions or stigma or one to look down on other religions.

There is no harm in having a high regard for one's own religion, but creating a second to none attitude over the religion and claiming supremacy over others would do more harm than good, as no religion on earth be it from the Vedic or the revealed traditions, encourage the said attributes.

One must always make it a point to understand that all religion exists for the well being of the believing society, thus all religions have to be respected and viewed positively, and doing so does not make oneself any less faithful to their own religion.

If one is to comment or hold an opinion on other religions there are certain prerequisites to be mi mindful of:

1. The ability to stand unbiased
2. An acceptable minimum knowledge and understanding of basic fundamentals of the religion being commented upon
3. Recognition that the religion co-exists on earth, and mutual respect towards regardless of differences and contractions it has with other religions.

This may sound demanding but these prerequisites ensure that a view given on another religion is open and balanced; mocking or denigrating other religions in comparison to one's own religion only causes misunderstanding.

One has to examine oneself to see if one is truly engaging in one's religion with deep love, respect and understanding of the religion's fundamental teachings, values and philosophies. If not, then clinging on to fanaticism is just an act of hypocrisy.

In the end, to be open to other religions requires one to first understand one's own religion, then understand the other religion and realise the diversities amongst religions, and accepting and accepting those diversities in order to sustain harmony and peace in any society.