

## Can India teach the world a new way of thinking?

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It is a historical fact that India was the only country in the world which withstood the onslaught of Muslim conversion.

Every country in Africa, Europe and Asia fell to the Muslim conversion. But India which was occupied and ruled for almost 1000 years by Muslim rulers never became a Muslim country. Why was it so?

A probable answer lies in the higher quality of Indian spiritual thought. Though physically beaten by the external rulers they could not conquer the hearts and minds of Indians. Another reason could be that religion was a very personal matter for most Indians. They had a personal god based upon India's ancient tradition, which they were not interested in surrendering to the messenger of God!

I feel that there is a great lesson for the world from this history, especially at this time when world over the forces of ethnic killings, conversions and fundamentalists are on the rise.

We need to revive the ancient Indian philosophical thought. It is not a religion in the narrow sense but a celebration of humanity. The Indian philosophical thought as enumerated in Vedas, Upanishads and [Patanjali Yoga Darshan](#) transcends all castes, creeds and physical boundaries and that should be the guiding principle for our national and International discourses. This [together with high technology](#) should be the Mantra of development for not only India but the world. I think this could be the basis of a new philosophy.

Every act of violence for ethnic cleansing brings the faith to the fore and the strong reaction to it forces the population to become even more fundamentalist. The whole basis of subjugation of one religion by another brings in greater misery and more radicalization.

All religions control the hearts and minds of their followers mostly by coercive means. In fact all isms and religions have been used for such control. The spirit of enquiry is missing in most of them and their message is explicitly based on faith which is always blind.

The ancient Indian philosophical thought was based on spirit of enquiry where the guru only showed the way – the disciple had to find the goal. That is the higher form

of thought process and is spiritual in nature rather than the dogmatic approach followed by all religions.

The hearts and minds of people in a non-violent way can only be captured by higher thought. No matter how criminal or evil a person is, he or she is always influenced by higher thought which is universal in nature. That is what the great personalities of world taught. They included Buddha, Christ, Guru Nanak or the authors of Indian philosophical thought among others.

In India itself, the [discourses of Adi Shankaracharya with Buddhist leaders](#) show the path. In a nonviolent way he discussed, debated and defeated the Buddhist monks and priests and then brought them back into Hindu fold. He also handed their temples back to them showing his internal security that came from the knowledge that his thought was superior and hence he was not afraid that they will convert back to Buddhism. This winning of their hearts and minds through higher intellectual thought is the way forward in this time of ethnic strife and violence all over world.

Similarly Mahatma Gandhi through his non-violent way won the hearts and minds of all Indians. He distilled the ancient philosophy of Gita and used it to raise the level of discourse to a very high level thereby achieving remarkable results.

However for this transformation to happen we need large numbers of Adi Shankaracharya and Mahatma Gandhi who will understand the great Indian philosophical thought and then spread its message to the world. This together with high technology should be our philosophy of development. [This combination will allow us to live sustainably](#) and efficiently and may give us a sense of purpose and an emotionally satisfying life.

Nevertheless for the world to follow this strategy we have to first make it happen here in India. In the past all great thoughts from India went abroad after they were practiced in India for quite some time. Thus there is a need for our own population to be tolerant about different shades of opinion. If we understand the greatness of our ancient philosophical thought then we can remove our fears and insecurities.

The political implications of this strategy can be immense. China which got its Buddhism from India may yet get its new philosophy from India. With two of the biggest nations on the earth united by the great Indian philosophical thought the world can have a brighter future.

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