



INTER-RITING AS AN INTERFAITH MODEL

A sociocognitive interpretation of
inter-riting or interfaith rituals
between Hindu and Muslim
communities and possibilities in
peacebuilding

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Section 1: Principal theological positions about the **religious other**



Hinduism

- **Hinduism and other faiths**

- >> Concept of Sanatana Dharma' but no assertion of exclusive truth

- >> Multiplicity of views within Hinduism; no central scripture

- >> Of the 6 major schools of philosophy in ancient India, even atheism finds a place

- >> Religious tolerance, naturally pluralistic

{“Ekam Sat, viprah bahudha vadanti”

Truth is One, sages describe it variously (Rig Veda 1.164.46)}

{“The different practices based on the three Vedas, Samkhya, Yoga, Pashupata-mata, Vaishhnava-mata etc . are but different paths (to reach to the Greatest Truth) and people on account of their different aptitude choose from them whatever they think best and are deserved to be accepted. But as the sea is the final resting place for all types of streams , You are the only reaching place for all people whichever path, straight or zigzag, they may accept .”} - Shiv Mahimna stotra – better known via Swami Vivekananda

{“Vasudaiva Kutumbhakam” (Maha Upanishad)}

Islam

- **Islamic theology and other faiths**

>> Principle of *tawhid* (one God) – implied criticism of anyone who believes otherwise

>> Concepts/Words like *kafir* and *mushrikun*

>> Tolerance towards ‘People of the Book’

{He has revealed to you the scripture with truth, confirming what was before it, and he revealed the Torah and the Gospel} (Quran 3:3)

Avenues of Reconciliation

>> To each nation have we given sacred rites which they are to perform; so let them not dispute with you [Muhammad] of the matter, but you summon to your Lord. Indeed! You do follow right guidance. (22:67)

INTERFAITH RITUALS

Current practices



AL- Madinah Calgary Islamic Assembly

Request the pleasure of your presence
12th Annual
Interfaith Iftar Party



SUNDAY
the 10th June, 2018
At 8:30PM

in the evening at
Gumbad-e- Khizra Masjid
4616-80th AVE North East
Calgary, AB

Kindly RSVP By June 5th ,2018
Prof. Imam Syed Badiuddin Soharwardy
Chairman
Al Madinah Calgary Islamic Assembly
416-994-5467
Malik Ashraf
President
AL Madinah Calgary Islamic Assembly
403-966-0071



www.amcia.org





Current practices

- Current interfaith ritual practices – strictly social
- Feasts and festivals
- Outward facing
- Demands on hospitality but not belief
- Few transgressions, no fear of inauthenticity
- Often political ‘shows’



World Peace Prayer

ॐ नमोजी आद्या । वेद प्रतिपाद्या । जयजय स्वसंवेद्या । आत्मरूपा ॥१॥
देवा मुंघि गणेशु । सकलार्थ मतिप्रकाशु । महो निवृत्तिदासु । अवधारितो जी ॥२॥

Salutations! To 'OM' ॐ The Ultimate "TRUTH" -
The Ultimate "REALITY" - The Ultimate State of Matter
As enunciated in Vedas!
Salutations! To the self CONSCIOUSNESS! The Pure INTELLIGENCE!
The True "KNOWLEDGE" - The True Nature of the Soul "ATMAN"
O God! Thou art Ganesha! The Illuminator of all Intelligence!
The disciple of Saint Nivriti, says,
Please, pay attention, to my discourse (on Geeta)

गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णुः गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः । गुरुः साक्षात् परब्रह्म तस्मै श्री गुरवे नमः ॥
Prostrations! Unto "The GURU" - "The TEACHER"
who is BRAHMA, VISHNU and MAHESH;
who in reality is the Supreme Brahman! The Almighty-Incarnate!

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदव्यते । पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्टे ॥
ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ॥
'OM' is the "Entirety!" - "The Complete" - "The Whole!"
The Whole has emerged out of the Whole/the Complete!
If the whole is taken out from the whole, what remains is still whole!
'OM' itself is, Peace! Peace! Peace!

हरि ॐ ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वम् । यत्किंच जगत्यां जगत् ॥
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः । मा गृधः कस्यस्मिद् धनम् ॥
All this whatever exists in the world, is manifested by God!
Hence by renouncing it, Enjoy, covet not wealth which belongs to none!

ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः । तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं ॥ भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि । धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥
"O" Mother Earth and the Entire Cosmos
The adorable luster of GOD - SAVITR! - The SUN !
We contemplate! May that Supreme radiance stimulate our INTELLECT.

सर्वेऽपि सुखिनः सन्तु । सर्वेऽसन्तु निरामयः सर्वेऽभद्राणि पश्यन्तु । मा कश्चिद् दुःखमाप्नुयात् ॥
May all be happy !
May all be healthy !
May all enjoy prosperity and experience auspiciousness !
May none suffer from grief and sorrow!

द्यौः शान्तिः । अन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः । पृथ्वी शान्तिः । आपः शान्तिः । औषधयः शान्तिः । वनस्पतयः शान्तिः ।
विश्वेदेवाः शान्तिः । ब्रह्म शान्तिः । सर्व शान्तिः । शान्तिरेव शान्तिः । साऽमा शान्तिरिधि ॥१७॥

ॐ शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ।
May Peace Prevail in the Sky !
May Peace Prevail in the Cosmic Space !
May Peace Prevail on Earth !
May Peace Prevail in the Waters !
May Peace Prevail in the Herbs !
May Peace Prevail in the Vegetation/plants !
May Peace prevail in the Lord of the Universe !
May Peace prevail in Brahma - The Creator !
May Peace Prevail with everyone !
May there be nothing but peace everywhere !
Let that Peace Prevail in Me !

(Interpreted by Prof. (Dr.) Vishwanath D. Karad)

The "World Peace Prayer" recited at
the Maharashtra Institute of
Technology, Pune



Women offer prayers at the Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah in Delhi. No woman is allowed inside the sanctum but Hindu women may pray from the outside, like their Muslim counterparts | Image: the delhiwalla.com

Section 2: Ritual interpretation

- Why ritual?
- Academic distinction
- Definitions and uses of ritual
- The ritual paradox
- Need to develop exegetical perspectives of ritual
- Spontaneous Exegetical Reflection (SER)



Academic distinctions

SCRIPTURE

- Belief or faith aspect of religion
- Domain of theologians
- Considered proofs
- Application of exegetical methods
- Textualisation of rituals¹

RITUAL

- Experience/ behaviour aspect of religion
- Domain of anthropologists
- Considered 'acts'
- Application of observatory methods
- Ritualisation of texts²

Rituals: Definitions, uses and paradoxes



- “The performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers” (Roy Rappaport 1999: 24)
- It is the most basic social act in that it establishes a **relationship** between the participants, and serves the primary function of **communication**

- Embodiment: Rituals imprint meaning upon the body
- Transformational

Psychological function of rituals

According to Lorenz (1963, 1966) and Pruyser (1968) ritual is manifested when there is a need to **control** and **direct emotion**. In public ceremonies rituals **manage, reduce,** and/ or **focus aggression**. This binds people together, enhances social organization, and creates a sense of **community**. Has adaptive and coping significance. Reduces uncertainty and anxiety.



The Ritual Paradox



- Null meaning of rituals = resistance to exegesis
- RITUAL PARADOX: Elements of co-operation, consensus and trust are retained as long as people do not try to explain what the ritual means.
- Personal/respective signification of ritual found in its nullity and silence

SER - Spontaneous Exegetical Reflection

[Ref: Harvey Whitehouse proposes the idea of SER in his 2004 work 'Modes of Religiosity: A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission']

Two contrasting modes of religious experience

DOCTRINAL

- Minimal
- Daily/ high frequency
- Contained
- Repetitive
- Orthodoxy
- More inclusive
- Does not evoke SER

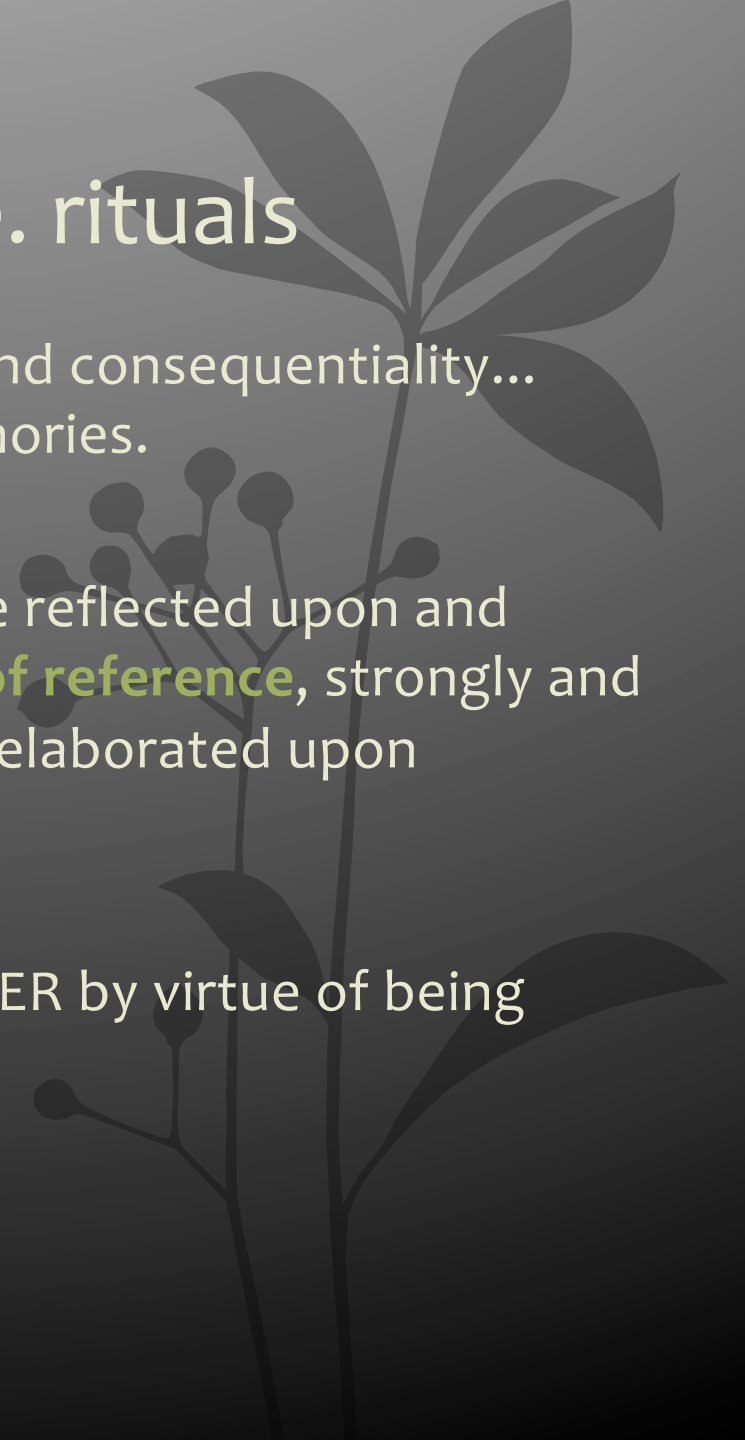
IMAGISTIC

- Maximal
- Rare/ low frequency
- Extravagant
- Performative
- Orthopraxy
- Exclusive
- Evokes SER



SER in imagistic modes i.e. rituals

- Episodic distinctiveness, emotionality, and consequentiality... together result in autobiographical memories.
- Rituals and other religious behaviour are reflected upon and because of the **lack of possible frames of reference**, strongly and lasting experiences get interpreted and elaborated upon spontaneously by participants
- All rituals have the potential to trigger SER by virtue of being 'symbolically motivated actions'



Section 3: Interfaith prayers as inter-riting for peace building between Hindus and Muslims



The power of (interfaith) ritual prayer

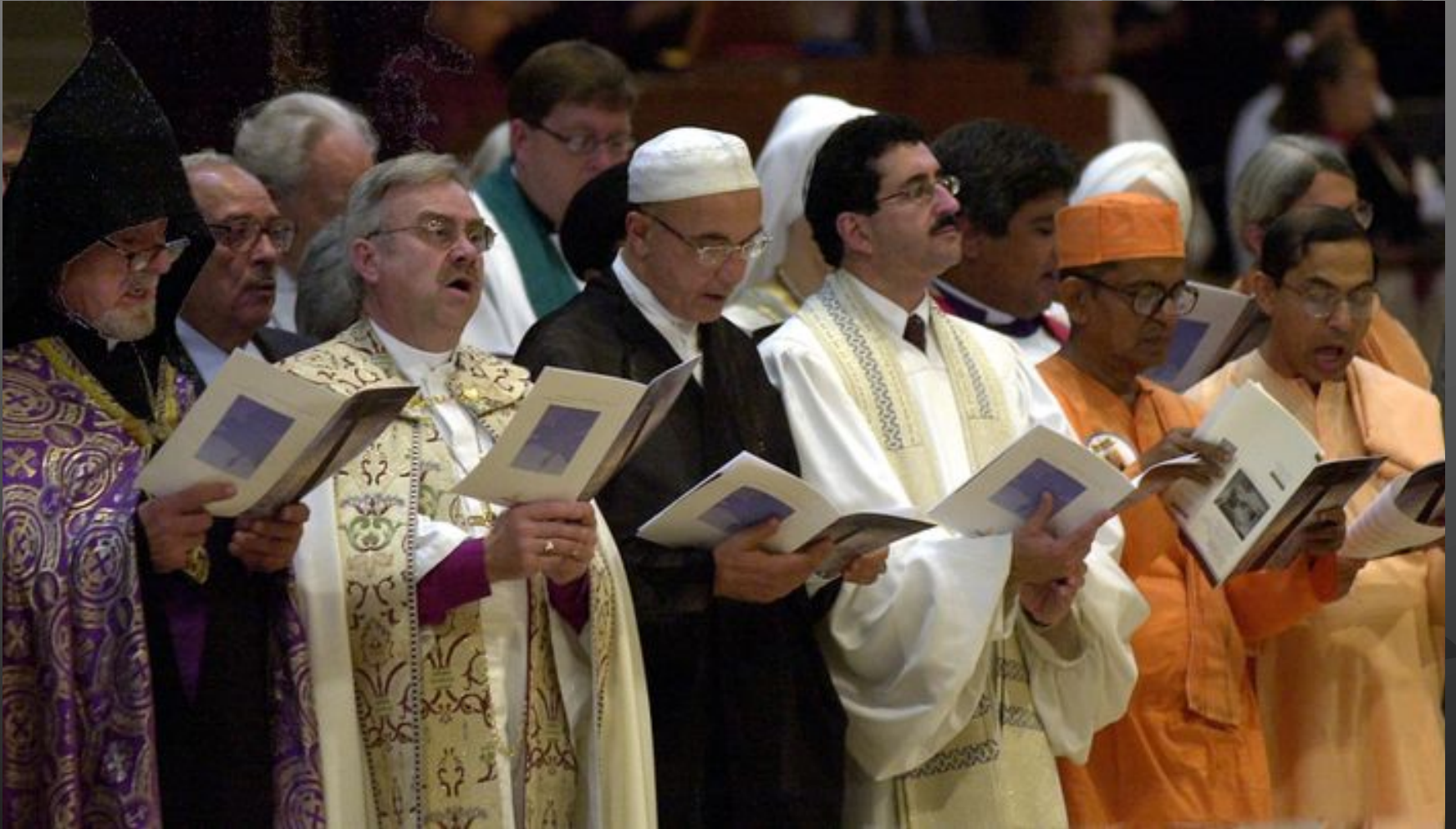
- **Two aspects of ritual sharing**

Sociopolitical
(solidarity)

Personal, spiritual
Journey

- Inter-riting as an alternative to inter-textuality
- Co-intentionality
- Uncertainty and wonder
- Transcending boundaries
- Binding yet open to interpretation
- Adoption and adaptation of existing models such as World Day of Prayer for Peace, PoWR's #prayforhumanity campaign, Interfaith Prayer Service templates, etc.

Thank you



interfaith prayer service celebrating the art and architecture of the new Our Lady of the Angels Cathedral Sept. 4, 2002, in downtown Los Angeles (Associated Press)