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## RESOLUTION OF MANDIR-MASJID CONFLICT IN INDIA: A STEP TOWARDS RELIGIOUS HARMONY: A CASE STUDY OF RAMESHWAR (RUI) MODEL FROM MAHARASHTRA INDIA

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### Abstract

India is a land of many religious faiths which are both ancient and modern. Religious harmony among these faiths is of paramount concern for every Indian. The modern Indian State and its Constitution emphasizes and guarantees the equal status to all religions and to all religious faiths and practices in India. However, due to various historical and political reasons the religious harmony is often compromised for short term gains. The Babri Masjid demolition and efforts to construct Rama Mandir at the same site has resulted in to serious conflict in the recent past and have caused concern for every peace loving citizen of India.

There is a lot of debate on the political front which is centered on the proper understanding of secularism and the legal and the other means to resolve this issue. However, what is required is an effort to establish the fact that the religious harmony can be established with a proper understanding and a right attitude of respect to every religion. For this purpose some concrete action is required which will demonstrate that the religious harmony is not a distant dream and can be achieved by mutual trust among people of different religions.

In this presentation I would like to share an experiment, carried out at Post Rameshwar (Rui) Dist: Latur, Maharashtra India. The ancient temple destroyed during the Peshwa regime and the mosque and a dargah destroyed during the Razakar agitation in the post-independence period were reconstructed by the initiative taken by Prof. Dr. Viswanath D. Karad, President, World Peace Centre Alandi-Pune & the Hindu-Muslims of Rameshwar (Rui) in the year 2011. The Public dedication ceremony of all the three monuments took place in the village on April 9, 2011

Rameshwar (Rui) is perhaps a signal to resolve the long pending Mandir-Masjid conflict in India. If the Muslims in India come forward to contribute to building the Ram temple and the Hindus contribute to building the mosque, then ideally there will be a communal harmony and these religious places will be true pilgrims of humanity of 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The dream of an "Empowered India" as envisaged by former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam came true in Rameshwar (Rui) on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2011 by this exemplary Hindu-Muslim unity.

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## 1. Introduction

Many intellectuals feel that there should be only one religion on this earth, so that all communal conflicts will end forever. Many also think that this sole religion should be a new one, having the summary of all religions. Mughal emperor Akbar the Great tried to do this by taking a few principles of the Qura'an Sharif, the Holy Bible and some holy Hindu scriptures. He named Deen-e-Ilahi (the religion of God). However, Akbar did not succeed in this attempt. The important part of this attempt is that Akbar himself was a Muslim and the flame of communal harmony that he ignited is still present amongst many. Prof. Dr. Vishwanath D. Karad is one such personality, whose whole life is enlightened by the thought of communal harmony and brotherhood.

The World Peace Centre (Alandi), MAEER's MIT, Pun, India (WPC) was formed under the aegis of MAEER's Maharashtra Institute of Technology, **an unaided college for engineering education, affiliated to University of Pune amongst the first in the state of Maharashtra**, founded by Dr. Karad. UNESCO, Paris has bestowed a UNESCO Chair for Human Rights, Democracy, Peace and Tolerance on WPC in 1998 for the dedicated work being carried out by the institution for promotion of Culture of Peace in the world. Within a short span of time Maharashtra Institute of Technology (M.I.T) institution has developed its brand & reputation in the field of higher education.

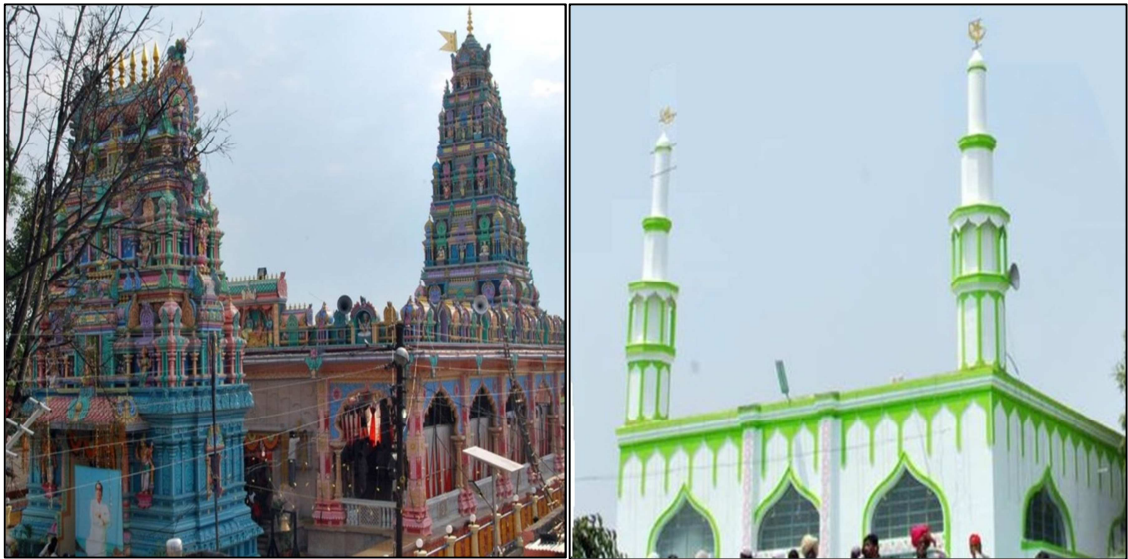
Prof. Dr. Vishwanath D. Karad also initiated the work of creating facilities for the millions of pilgrims at various pilgrim places like Alandi and Dehu near Pune. This massive work includes constructing beautiful and long-lasting *ghats* (stone steps as an approach to the river) on the banks of the river Indrayani, providing clean drinking water and sanitation facilities, diverting the sewerage of Alandi town away from the river Indrayani, in which the pilgrims perform ablutions & religious rites before visiting their deity, etc.

As a person who believes in carrying out comparative religious studies of all the world religions, Prof. Dr. V. D. Karad realized that most of the religions have the same basic religious principles and ideologies. An individual should use his religious and spiritual beliefs to establish inter-religious dialogue rather than foster communal hatred. With this thought, Dr. Karad established the 'Pilgrimage of Humanity' or 'Manavta-Teerth' at Rameshwar (Rui).

## 2. Methodology:

Rameshwar (Rui) is a small village like many other villages in India, with a population of not more than 2000. The fields of this village are irrigated by the Manjara dam nearby. The family of late Shri. Dadarao Karad, a farmer belonging to the **Warkari sect**, stays in this village. Prof. Dr. Vishwanath D. Karad, son of Dadarao Karad, due to his sharp intellect and thirst for education, after attaining primary education in Rameshwar (Rui), went on to become a Mechanical Engineer from the reputed Govt. College of Engineering, Pune. In 1983, he established the Maharashtra Institute of Technology (MIT) in Pune, after undergoing a lot of struggle to convince the government of Maharashtra of the need to *establish* unaided privately held colleges for higher education, looking at the needs of the students.

WPC was established under the aegis of MIT in 1996. In the ensuing period, WPC organized many conferences and seminars related to establishing the 'Culture of Peace' in the world. All this led to Dr. Karad establishing the 'Pilgrimage of Humanity' at Rameshwar (Rui). Hindus & Muslims together voluntarily contributed their skilled labour & also material help for renovation of temple & dargah.



Ram Mandir Jama Masjid & Zainuddin Dargah  
at Rameshwar (Rui) village at Rameshwar (Rui) Village

*The residents of Rameshwar (Rui) village, irrespective of religion, caste or creed, took part in the consecration ceremony of the **Ram Mandir** and inauguration of the renovated **Zainuddin Dargah** and **Mosque** with great fervor and enthusiasm.*

### 3. Findings:

For many years now, village Rameshwar is the home of people of different castes, religions and communities including Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, etc. It is said that nearly 250 years ago, the armies of the Maratha Peshwas and Nizam fought a heated battle at village Rameshwar. The ancient Shri Ram temple in the village was razed to the ground in this battle. Some of the ruins of this temple are still seen in the village. Later, around the year 1948, during the infamous Razakar agitation, a Hindu mob burned down the Jama Masjid and the adjacent Hazrat Zainuddin Dargah at Rameshwar.

During this incident, late Dadarao Karad played a very important role. When the holy places of the town were being destroyed in the fire of communal hatred, he kept alive the flame of humanity burning in his heart. He provided protection to the Muslims of the village and kept them away from the violence, irrespective of their caste or religion. Little Vishwanath grew up imbibing such high values propagated by his father. By reconstructing the old temple, mosque and dargah, Dr. Karad has proved that such religious places will become pilgrimages of humanity only if people, irrespective of the religion they belong to join hands with people of other religions for the cause of communal harmony and peace.

For the last many years, India is facing the perplexing issue of Ram Janmabhomi Mandir – Babari Masjid at Ayodhya. India has suffered great losses at different levels due to this. Dr. Karad believes in the prophecy of Swami Vivekananda that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, India will lead the world and show the path of peace and happiness to the entire mankind.

The beauty of the Rameshwar (Rui) experiment is that Muslims also gracefully donated for construction of Ram Mandir in this village and Hindus thought that the mosque and Zainuddin Dargah, which was damaged by Hindus, be rebuilt and Hindus also gracefully donated to build the Dargah and beautify the campus of the Mandir-Masjid complex. **The villagers of Rameshwar (Rui), irrespective of religion, caste or creed, took part in the consecration ceremony of the Ram Mandir and inauguration of the renovated dargah and mosque with great fervor and enthusiasm. This experiment succeeded only due to the great respect the members of the Hindu and Muslim community have towards each other and each other's' places of worship.**

## 4. Conclusion:

I personally feel that the reconstruction of the Shri Ram Mandir, Jama Masjid and Hazrat Zainuddin Dargah at Rameshwar (Rui) is the true 'Pilgrimage of Humanity' of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Whatever may happen in future, but whenever I see these magnificent edifices in Rameshwar (Rui), I am reminded of this famous Marathi bhajan by Rashtrasant Tukdoji Maharaj:

*Let brotherhood always foster in India,  
O Lord, bless us so!  
Let all communities live as one,  
O Lord, bless us so!  
Let the poor and the rich come together,  
May they be Hindus, Christians or Muslim,  
Let the joy of freedom be theirs,  
O Lord, bless us so!*

I believe that this event at Rameshwar (Rui) is perhaps a signal to resolve the long pending Mandir-Masjid conflict in India, a step towards religions harmony & Peace. If the Muslims in India come forward to contribute to building the Ram Temple and the Hindus contribute to building the Mosque, then ideally there will be communal harmony

If more such 'Pilgrimages of Humanity' come up in all the villages of India, the day is not far when the dream of an 'Empowered India' as envisaged by former President Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam is realized. On 9<sup>th</sup> April 2011, empowered India took birth in Rameshwar (Rui)!

## References:

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- 12) *Mandir-Masjid project established in Rameshwar (Rui), Dist. Latur (M.S.) (9<sup>th</sup> April 2011) by World Peace Centre (Alandi), MAEER's MIT, Pune, India.*
- 13) *Let brotherhood always..... O Lord bless us so! – famous bhajan of Rashtrasant Tukdoji Maharaj, selected as "University Song" by Dr. S. N. Pathan, Vice-Chancellor of University, Nagpur (2006).*