

Inclusive Communication for Promoting Peace, Harmony and Religious Pluralism: Insights from Exemplary Political Leaders of Ancient, Medieval and Modern India

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ABSTRACT

At a time in which countries are endorsing a vision of a national community in which people of many faiths (and no professed faith) are invited to participate in all spheres of society, only a leadership practising inclusive communication can contribute to a harmonious and peaceful world. The history of ancient, medieval and modern India provides many inspirational political leaders who demonstrated inclusive communication. This paper attempts to showcase such leaders through their own words and actions in order to guide leaders in all areas who are interested in developing inclusive leadership which does not discriminate people on the basis of race, religion, colour, caste, gender or culture. Even though a lot of works are available on these leaders, not much is researched on their inclusive leadership styles especially their communications and actions. Hence this paper proposes to fill this gap by researching their own communications and actions which demonstrate their inclusive leadership styles. Inclusive leaders cited in this paper who established peace and harmony invariably practised a galaxy of virtues such as equality, respect, reverence, sympathy, tolerance, gratitude, compassion, charity, humility, forgiveness, and sincerity. Self-control, patience, sacrifice, unselfishness, self-negation, discipline, courtesy are also found in these leaders. It may also be noted that in some political leaders studied in this paper, the sentiment of compassion has found a great place and is the basis of all feelings such as ahimsa (non-violence), akrodha (freedom from anger), asteya (absence of theft), dana (charity), daya (mercy), kshanti (endurance), amatsara (absence of jealousy), anirshya (absence of envy) which are insisted in leaders as worth possessing virtues.

Keywords: Indian History, Inclusive Leadership, Religious Tolerance, Spirituality

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive communication adopted by the leaders prepares the ground where people following different religions and cultures can live together with mutual respect and tolerance, rather than in suspicion and animosity. The history of ancient, medieval and modern India provides many inspirational role models of leaders who championed the cause of inclusive communication. This paper proposes to study the inclusive communication styles of five exemplary leaders from India viz. Ashoka, the Great, Bukkaraya-I, Akbar, the Great, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam who provided leadership during different periods of Indian history. These leaders are studied through their own communications and actions which demonstrate their inclusive leadership styles. This paper also attempts to showcase their words and actions in order to guide political leaders who are interested in developing inclusive communication which does not discriminate people on the basis of race, religion, colour, caste, gender or culture.

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Ashoka, the Great (Ruled during 299BC-234BC)

King Asoka, who ruled India during 299 BC- 234 BC belonging to Mauryan dynasty, has been regarded as one of the remarkable kings in world history. The edicts, caused to be inscribed on rocks and pillars by him proclaim his reforms and policies besides advising to his subjects on the measures introduced by him to provide welfare state and his expectations from his subjects regarding moral practices. These edicts provide insights into Ashoka's desire and efforts to establish an empire on the foundation of dhamma (a set of moral values) which help his subjects in achieving both material and spiritual

welfare (Dhammika, S, 1993). Ashoka preached and practiced tolerance and respect for each other's differences, because he appreciated the underlying unity of all human beings. He practised inclusivity and aimed to connect with everyone both inside and outside his empire. Ashoka's empathy and compassion were not limited to his relatives and friends, but rather extended to whole world known to him. Ashoka's reforms were appreciated and followed by the Buddhist monarchs throughout the ancient world as they looked to his style of good governance as worthy of imitation. Today many nations suffer from crises due to growing hatred, exclusion, discrimination of various types and hence they search for a political philosophy that address these issues and help leaders and people in developing inclusive approach in all matters so that peace may prevail in the world. Asoka's edicts may make a meaningful contribution to the development of a political system genuinely based on inclusion and create conditions for peace and harmony to prevail. Ashoka attaches a lot of importance in achieving successful and good governance through communication.

Ashoka realised that the progress among the people through Dhamma can encouraged by persuasion and not by strict regulations. According to him persuasion has had a greater effect. Therefore, at many places he got his message of Dhamma inscribed on stone pillars or stone slabs, so that it may remain forever. It may be said that Ashoka is the first political leader in the world who attempted to bring a change for good in his administration through communication. He wished that he and his officers should treat all his subjects as his own children and provide assistance and help whenever they needed as they provide that to their own children (Kalinga Rock Edicts, I).

This inclusive communication of treating all people as his children inspired Ashoka to provide good governance which he got recorded in his inscriptions. He encouraged even his officials also to cultivate this sense of parental responsibility towards his people and told them that he is committing the care of his people, as a man would hand over his child to a skilful nurse with confidence (Pillar Edict, IV). He even asked his officers to create in the mind of the people of unconquered neighboring countries the belief that they need not fear him as he loves them and instead they should look treat him as their father. They get from him only happiness and not sorrow. Ashoka asked them to trust him as they trust their own father (Kalinga Rock Edict, II).

Ashoka worked hard and made himself available irrespective of where he was and what he what he was doing (Rock Edict, VI). Ashoka's philosophy of inclusion extended beyond human beings and included all creations. This is evident in his action of building hospitals and providing medical assistance by importing and growing medicinal herbs from foreign countries (Rock Edict, II).

He helped animals also which are dumb and cannot express what they want. This is another rare example of a leader hearing the unheard. Ashoka is a remarkable champion of inclusive leadership especially related to religious pluralism and he promoted global religiosity even then (3rd Century B.C.) as is evident in his Rock Edict XII in which he has expressed his intention of allowing all religions to grow in his kingdom without any special favour for any one religion and discrimination against other religions of his time.

He attached great importance to communication in this regard and he was against praising one's own religion too much because of over attachment (Rock Edict-XII). Ashoka, preferred a friendly study of all religions and not a critical study of all religions. A friendly study helps in appreciating the good found in other religions whereas a critical study points out the bad in other religions.

In practising religious pluralism Ashoka was greatly influenced by Lord Buddha, who did not insist that his teaching was the only absolute Truth to the exclusion of all others. Therefore, Buddha remained in harmony with other philosophers. He advised his followers not to keep aloof from the views of any type of philosophy because if they do so they may become prejudiced (Hajime Nakamura, 1991, p.169).

Ashoka aimed to practice the Middle Path propagated by Lord Buddha. The Middle Path includes a bit of everything and maintains a harmonious balance with everything. Along with the Middle Path Buddha also insisted on developing four states of mind. In Pali, the language of the Buddhist scriptures, these four states are known as Brahma-Viharas. They are considered to be the ideal social attitudes which are the foundations of ethical code of conduct towards living beings. The four "sublime states" are:

1. Metta (Maitri): loving-kindness towards all.
2. Karuna: compassion towards all sentient beings to be free from suffering.
3. Mudita: sympathetic joy of rejoicing in the happiness and virtues of all sentient beings.
4. Upekkha: equanimity is not to distinguish between friend, enemy or stranger, but regard every sentient being as equal.

The Dalai Lama, a contemporary Buddhist monk working towards religious harmony and world peace says that it is intrinsic responsibility of world religions to maintain world peace. And he furthers his claim on religious inclusivity when he states that Universal Humanitarianism and Compassion “are in accordance with the ethical teachings of all world religions” (Dalai Lama, 2012, Pp.91-100)

King Vira Bukkaraya-I (Ruled during 1356AD-1377AD)

The principle and policy adopted by the Vijayanagara kings of Karnataka State in India is worth mentioning here as it created an atmosphere of religious catholicity. The king Bukkaraya, one of the founders of this kingdom, who was an inclusive leader, brought about the reconciliation in 1368 AD between the Jainas and Vaishnavas, two different religious communities that existed in his kingdom through inclusive communication. The Sravanabelgola inscription, which records this incident, is one of the most beautiful pieces among the epigraphic records of Karnataka that highlight religious pluralism. The original inscription is in Kannada language and English translation of a relevant portion is given below:

Dispute having arisen between the Jainas and Bhaktas (Sri-Vaishnavas), the Bhavyajanas (the Jainas) of all the Nadus... having made petition to Vira Bukkaraya (1368 AD), about the injustice done by the Bhaktas, the king taking the hand of the Jainas and placing it in the hand of the Sri-Vaishnavas of the eighteen Nadus, including all the Acharyas of the places... and declaring (at the same time) that there was no difference between the Vaishnava Darshana (Vaishnavism) and the Jaina-Darshana (Jainism).

If loss or advancement should be caused to the Jaina-Darshana through the Sri-Vaishnavas, the Sri-Vaishnavas will kindly deem it as loss or advancement caused to their own (Darshana). The Sri-Vaishnavas will to this effect kindly set up a Shasana (inscription) in all the Bastis (Jain worshipping places) of the kingdom.

For as long as the sun and the moon endure, the Sri-Vaishnava creed will continue to protect the Jaina-Darshana. The Sri-Vaishnavas and the Jainas are one (body); they must not be viewed as different (Bhatta, Panduranga, C, 1997, Pp 519-22).

This exemplary epigraph will remain eternally as a monument of the most large-hearted religious tolerance as preached and practised in Karnataka and as a piece of one of the best examples of inclusive communications. The successor of Bukkaraya was his son, Harihara II, who too maintained the glorious traditions of his father. He too believed that it is not beneficial for people to be proud of any particular religion and to exclude the rest from cognizance. Worship of all manifestations, therefore, must be tolerated. It is also not good and not necessary to replace one deity by another, because it is not a matter of importance whether the absolute and infinite God is called Shiva, Vishnu, Arhat or Buddha. An inscription found at Belur in Karnataka State contains a remarkable inclusive statement in Sanskrit language which is produced here in English translation:

May Hari, the ruler of the Universe,
worshipped by the Saivas as Shiva,
by the Vedantins as Brahma,
by the Buddhists as Buddha,
by the Mimamsakas as Karma,
by the Naiyayikas as Karta,
by the Jainas as the Arhat,
grant our prayers (Epigraphia Carnatica, VI. Belur, 3).

Vijayanagara kings were the followers of Rajadharma (code of conduct for kings) framed by the writers on polity and practised by the exemplary kings of ancient India. Rajadharma required kings to act impartially and not to discriminate people on the basis of their status (Rajendran, C, 2005, Pp. 31-40). A great example of practising Rajadharma by a king named Chandrapida who ruled India during 7th century AD is recorded in a historical work viz. Rajatarangini composed by Kalhana (12th C. AD) in Sanskrit. As recorded by Kalhana the officers of king Chandrapida were trying to construct a temple at a particular spot where a small hut of a cobbler existed. The cobbler did not agree to shift his hut when asked to do so by the officers. When the officers informed the king about this he chided them for asking a poor cobbler to remove his hut. The king advised his officers to stop building the temple or build it elsewhere. He did not wish to spoil a pious act by illegally taking a poor man's land. Then the king goes to cobbler's hut and settles the issue by purchasing the hut with the consent of the cobbler and by paying a much higher price far beyond cobbler's expectation. Then the cobbler told the king:

Following the principles of rajadharma, you have agreed to the request of a person so low in stature and this is worthy of a king.
I wish you good and may you live long,
You have established the supremacy of law (dharma).
Seeing your example others would also act accordingly (Rajatarangini, IV, 75-77).

Akbar, the Great (1543 AD-1605AD)

Akbar, the great was a great military leader and builder of imperial empire and also was a man of deep compassion for all living beings. As an inclusive leader he respected women, firmly rejected religious formalism and intolerance, disapproved inhuman practices like slavery, sati and polygamy. He was deeply involved in his people and helped them in solving their problems. The inclusive and humane facets of Akbar's personality are often overshadowed in historical records and other narratives by his military exploits and administrative measures (Moosvi, Shireen, 1994). Akbar was naturally inclined towards religious tolerance. His broadmindedness was due to the influence of his parents and teachers. His teachers included two Shi'a's from Iran viz. Bairam Khan and Mir'Abu'I Latif Qazvini, and the Sunni Turani, Mun'im Khan who were free from sectarian prejudices (Habib, Ifran, 2011, p.81). Akbar's catholic attitude also was due to the cultural ethos of Timurids who used to respect all religions alike. The toleration of different religions seems to have persisted in the political thinking of Timur up to the time of Akbar came to the throne (Khan, Iftiqr Alam, 1991, Pp. IX-XIV).

In his early years Akbar was a strong follower of Islam and he was also intolerant towards Hinduism. He himself regretfully admitted of having converted many Hindus into Islam (Elliot and Dowson, 1964, p.189). But Akbar's marriage with the daughters of a number of Hindu Rajput chieftains changed his attitude towards Hinduism. He even started performing sacrifices and a type of fire worship along with his Hindu wives (Habib, Ifran, 2011, P. 85). Thus he was not averse to performing Hindu rites being rooted in Islam. His inclusive policy made him abolish pilgrimage tax (1563 AD) and Jizya (1564AD) and he announced a grant in support of a Hindu temple in Vrindavan (1565AD) (Mukherjee, Tarapada and Habib, Ifran, 1987, pp. 235, 237). The pantheistic Sufi doctrines influenced Akbar's world view to a great extent. The impact of Iban al-'Arabi's pantheism is evident in Akbar's socio-political perceptions especially his notion that all religions are either equally true or equally illusory (Habib, Ifran, P.87). Arabi is identified with the concept of Sulh-i-Kul (absolute peace) which aimed at promoting peace among divergent groups in a culturally pluralistic country. Akbar was very much interested in knowing the principles and doctrines of all contemporary religions. Akbar invited to join discussion in his Ibadat Khana (House of Worship) people following different religions and philosophical systems such as Sufi, Sunni, Shi'a, Brahman, Jati (Jain), Charvaka, Jew, Zorastrian and others and they enjoyed equal patronage of Akbar (Beveridge, H.H, 1921, p. 365). Akbar was attracted to Jainism on account of his belief in non-killing and compassion towards all living beings and because of his belief in the transmigration of souls (Prasad Pushpa, 2011, P.108).

Akbar made no discrimination in appointing people to high positions in his Government. Hindus severed under Muslim nobles and Muslims fought under Hindu general (Ahmed, Bashir, 2009). Akbar's inclusive leadership tried to cement the differences between Hindus and Muslims by inter-communal marriages, making no distinction of caste or creed in the conferment of high titles and offices besides trying to establish a new inclusive faith called Din-I-Ilahi (Roychoudhury, M.L, 1941). Due to this new faith, he abolished the poll tax called Jizya. This tax was levied upon non-Muslim subjects for providing security of life and property, toleration of their religions and toleration of their places of worship such as temples, churches, synagogues etc. Akbar's influence on Hindu nobility was great as they accepted his regulations related to their social life and tolerated him when he touched their deep rooted traditional customs in their own interest. He did not interfere in order to spoil their sacred customs but only tried to stop inhuman practices such as 'sati' (burning of a widow alive on the funeral pier of her dead husband against her will). These reforms were based on Akbar's love and humanity (Akbarnama, iii. 402, 641). Akbar was deeply interested in knowing Hindu epics, romances, religion and philosophy. Hindu and Muslim painters worked together in his court which gave rise to the famous Indo-Mughal painting (Brown, P, 1924). Akbar brought Hindus and Muslims close together and there was no religious persecution. Everybody was allowed to follow the religion that he/she liked (Wilson, HH, 1824, Pp. 49-62). Hindu festival such as Rakhi, Dasara and Diwali were also celebrated by the king and his courtiers (Kennedy, Vans, 1820, Pp. 242-270). He celebrated his birth day giving huge charity as per Hindu ceremony of Tuladan. In this ceremony king weighed against gold, silver, scents, some metals, minerals, silk, cereals, etc. and these things were given away in charity to the needy, Hindus and Muslims. In order to announce his inclusive and benevolent nature and activities Akbar assumed the following titles:

Sun of Benevolence and Bounty,
Enlightened Seer of the Truth,
Achiever of Universal Peace,
Fountain of those who Thirst for the Waters of Knowledge,
Beacon of Benevolent Society,
Riveter of the Chain of Universal Justice,
Ocean of Generosity,
Equitable Equinox of Justice,
Source of Smiling Donations.
Source of Powerful Benevolence (Collier, 2011 pp. 24-26).

His inclusive communication is clearly evidenced in his first letter to the Jesuits of Goa:

To the Chief Priests of the Order of Saint Paul:
Be it known to them that I am a great friend of theirs.

... I request you to send back to me two of your learned men, who should bring books of the Law, and above all the Gospels, because I truly and earnestly desire to understand their perfection; and with great urgency, I again demand that they should come with my ambassador aforesaid, and bring their books. For, from their coming I shall obtain the utmost consolation; they will be dear to me, and I shall receive them with every possible honour...

As soon as I shall have become well instructed in the Law, and shall have comprehended its perfection, they will be able, if willing, to return at their pleasure, and I shall send them back with great honours, and appropriate rewards. Let them not fear me in the least, for I receive them under my pledge of good faith and assure them concerning myself. (Collier, Dirk, 2011, P. 578).

Mahatma Gandhi (1869AD-1948AD)

Mahatma Gandhi aimed to establish communal and religious harmony and peace through non-violence (*ahimsa*). He encouraged tolerance and respect for every religion in order to establish peace amongst various religious communities in India. According to Gandhi truth-realisation lies through identification with all human beings, with all creatures, with all that exists, particularly those that are animate, based on solidarity and compassion on the one hand, and a recognition of interdependence on the other. He believed in Advaita philosophy (non-dualism) one of the Indian philosophical systems. According to Gandhi Advaita teaches the essential unity of man and he in his view if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and if one man falls, the whole world falls (Varma Ravindra, 2006, P.141).

Gandhi revolted against the outrageous Indian practice of untouchability which excluded certain section of population and denied privileges to them. Gandhi condemned this in every form. He could not believe that the Hindu religion had ordained or sanctified such a crude practice. Hinduism believed in the equality of all human beings besides believing in the oneness of all that lived and existed (advaita). There it is unbelievable that such a religion sanctioning discrimination and untouchability. He defied the customs that had grown around 'untouchability'. He even challenged the leaders and priests of orthodoxy to prove that belief in untouchability was a part of Hinduism. He led mass movements for the abolition of untouchability, and suffered from the ordeals of long fasts to change the hearts and minds of those who believed in, and practised 'untouchability'.

Gandhi's concept of religion is that which transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and others; which changes one's nature, which binds one strongly to the truth within.() To him religion had an ethical and a spiritual part. The ethical part was the base from which the spiritual journey starts. According to him one could not expect uniformity in perceptions and even experience in the spiritual realm. Perception and experiences may vary from individual to individual. All may be valid in their own way (many sidedness of reality); all may be incomplete. But all deserved the highest respect, and all deserved to be studied and understood reverentially (Chatterjee, Margaret, 2005, P.315). Gandhi believed that there is something special we can learn from every religion, even while being rooted in the religion in which one grew up. (Khoshoo, T.N, 1995, P.69).

Conversion to another religion is not necessary for one to learn from it, and enrich what one has already learnt from the religion into which one was born. It is by practising the best in one's religion and reverentially learning from what is the special vision (perception) of other religions that one can advance spiritually.

All human minds do not think alike. There are different perceptions and different views, and these are often rigidly held with much force or passion. Conscious or sub conscious claims of infallibility may lead to intolerance, hostility and the desire to ensure that one's views prevail-even if other's views are suppressed along with others who hold different views. Such situations create conflict, which may lead to violence and destruction. Human society can hold together only on the basis of a force that can tolerate the reality of different views and yet hold people together. Mutual love is the one such force that can permit differences to coexist... (Young India, 2-3-22). Love is the greatest force of creation, cohesion, and transformation. Contrarily hatred can arouse and intensify opposition besides leading to extreme intolerance and the desire to eliminate. Gandhi also pointed out the importance of appreciating interdependence in inclusion:

Gandhi called himself an *anekantavadi* or a *syadvadi*, that is to say, one who accepts the many-sidedness of truth, a theory which can accommodate apparent contradiction through pointing out that ever changing reality presents itself in different

ways, according to distinguishable perspectives. The comprehension of a thing from different points of view develops in people compassion and tolerance necessary for peaceful coexistence. By virtue of this doctrine of *anekanta*, one will be able to appreciate the viewpoints of others. *Anekanta* also makes one to investigate as to how and why others hold a different view and how the apparent contradictions can be reconciled in a peaceful manner (Dwivedi, RC, 1975, P.10) The doctrine of *anekanta-vada* developed in Jainism, an ancient Indian philosophical system captures the spirit of tolerating plural truth-claims in all walks of life. The comprehension of a thing from different points of view develops in an inclusivistic outlook necessary for peaceful co-existence. Gandhi says,

It is this doctrine that has taught me to judge a Mussaman from his own standpoint and a Christian from his. Formerly I used to resent the ignorance of my opponents. Today I can love them because I am gifted with the eye to see myself as others see me and vice versa (CWMG, XXIX, 1958-94, p. 411).

He says,

...if people of different religions grasp the real significance of their own religion they will never hate the people of any other than their own...there may be many religions, but the true aim of all is the same.(CWMG,VII, p.338).

If a man reaches the heart of his own religion, he has reached the heart of the others too (Kripalani, K.R, 1958, p.56)

A manifold realization seems to be needed; realising inwardly the essential meaning of one's own religion, translating that meaning in terms of living accordingly, i.e., the requirement of appropriate action; realising that there are others who follow different paths. (Chatterjee, Margaret, 2005, p.323). Respecting religions means respecting the individuals to whom particular religious traditions are dear. The notion of equal respect rules out the preference of some and ignoring others. The insight that others are like oneself does not rule out evident differences, but lessens their prominence and serves to bridge the social distance. Gandhi points out the advantages of respect over tolerance:

I have advanced from tolerance to equal respect for all religions. We should by living the life according to our lights share the best with one another. The best in another religion may include an element which is absent in our own. (CWMG, LVI, p.155).

Giving equal respect means 'paying equal homage to the best of Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Judaism. Paying homage included both proclaiming and practicing (Varma, Ravindra, 2006, Pp.143-144). Gandhi believed in widening the circle of love, from oneself to the family, from the family to the village, from the village to the nation-and further to encompass the whole of humanity and all living beings (Varma, Ravindra, 2006, P.107). In his view love functions as the crucial force of cohesion in human society in which the exercise of reason and imagination may create differences of opinion that may lead to conflict, distrust and disintegration. Only love can stop this possibility and hence love is the Law of Human species. Therefore, he said that non-violence (love) is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute (Varma, Ravindra, 2006, P/107).

In his own Ashram or wherever he attended a prayer, Gandhi made it a point to have hymns read out from the sacred scriptures of all major religions- Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Sikkism etc. It may be noted here that during India's pre-partition and post-partition days, when some members of the audience objected to the recitation of the Quran, he refused to have hymns read out from any of the scriptures. He stuck to his point till every objector eventually withdrew his objection. He honoured all religions and asked his followers to do so, because they all voiced truths which were part of mankind's total precious heritage. He said,

Cleanse your hearts of all narrowness
and make them as broad as the Ocean.
That is the teaching of the Quran and the Gita.

(Saiyidain, K.G, 1994, P. 36).

It is necessary to point out Gandhi's inclusive communication strategies. He was always using the appropriate words to communicate his ideas to his listeners and readers. He was using words or symbols which were easy to understand by his listeners and readers would easily understand. One such example is Gandhi's famous concept of an ideal order which was called *Ramarajya*. This ideal order promotes prosperity, peace, inclusion, virtue and discipline (Murthy, Narasimha, H.V, 2005, P. 25). As millions of Hindu listeners and even listeners of other religions who were Indians understood what *Ramarajya* stood for, Gandhi used the word to refer to an ideal order which provided safety, prosperity and peace for all. In places where the

majority of his listeners were Muslims he was using the word Khuda or Allah while to a Christian audience he would describe it as the Kingdom of God (Varma, Ravindra, 2006, P.64). This clearly indicates Gandhi's strategy of convincing the masses in a language which they understood instead of confusing them with jargons.

APJ Abdul Kalam (India's president during 2002-2007) was a great follower of Gandhi and he provides some insights on religion transforming into spirituality with quoting incidents from his life in simple language. Once he was invited by the Bishop of Rajkot, Rev. Father Gregory to inaugurate the Christ College in Ajmer in India. Before the inauguration on invitation from the nearby Swaminarayana temple they entered the inner sanctum of the temple and they were all received with the offering of tilak (auspicious mark) on their foreheads. Dr. Kalam writes,

...it was a great sight with Rev. Father Gregory, Abdul Kalam and Y.S. Rajan all having the shining tilak on their foreheads. This incident demonstrates the strength of connectivity of different religions in India leading to a unique spiritual experience.

...every religion has two components: religious preaching and spiritual insights. The spiritual focus influenced by compassion and love must be merged in integrated mission and this alone is capable of developing inclusive leaders for the betterment of the world (Kalam Abdul, APJ, 2012, Pp.201-202).

CONCLUSION

In the 21st Century, increasingly, all over the world people of diverse religious perspectives encounter one another at many places. Insightful learning from Indian political leaders of different periods can help in preparing a framework and give adequate guidance to leaders to practise inclusive communication besides respecting the diverse religious, political, and cultural identities of their people. Before concluding it may also be pointed out that the leaders who practised inclusive communication, discussed in this paper, who established peace and harmony, invariably practised a galaxy of virtues such as equality, respect, reverence, sympathy, tolerance, gratitude, compassion, charity, humility, forgiveness, and sincerity. Self-control, patience, sacrifice, unselfishness, self-negation, discipline, courtesy are also found in these leaders. Therefore, it may be safely concluded that in order to practise inclusive communication and inclusive leadership it becomes necessary to develop these eternal virtues in leaders in the making.

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- Note:** All the inscriptions of Ashoka, the Great cited in this paper are taken from Dhammika, S, "An English Translation of the Edicts of Asoka" in Hemendu Bikas Chowdhury (Ed.), *Ashoka 2300, Jagajyoti; Ashoka Commemoration Volume Published by Bauddha Dharmankur Sabha*, Calcutta, 1997, Pp. 49-58.
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