

## Uniting the East and the West: Emerson's Oriental Vision

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**ABSTRACT:** *Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), an American essayist, poet and public lecturer, is called the father of American culture of diversity in faiths and practices. The philosophy of diversity has received its guiding light from its integration and assimilation of the Oriental philosophy of Unity into the philosophy Emerson preached in America. The paper investigates Emerson's maturing life events and his study and internalization of the oriental texts and scriptures and shows that Emerson's construction of philosophy of religious and cultural multiplicity foreseen for America is greatly contributed to by the vision of Unity gleaned from the Orient.*

**Keywords:** *Emerson- Orient-Unity- Religion-Self-Reliance*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

*The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (1996)* by Samuel P. Huntington may arguably be the first of the scary modern works foretelling imminent clashes among civilizations due to “the resentment and hostility of the non-western peoples against the West” (p. 59). Huntington understandably places the root of the non-western resentment on the increased role of religion in world politics. Martha C. Nussbaum (2013), with reference to “religious animosity and violence” (p.1) in Europe, finds “religious prejudice and fear” persistent “against the “strange” minorities” (p.2) in America. Frankly speaking, in the post 9/11 America, the reality on the ground has been witnessing the sharp rise of religious and racial intolerance and the hostility of American people towards the followers of other faiths to the extent that President Barrack Obama was suspected to be a Muslim and hence “unfit for the office”. Obama controversy was one of the many in America. Ilhan Omar, American Congress woman from Minnesota, reports “a racist, death-threat laden voicemail” by fellow legislator Lauren Boebert (Aljazeera, 2021) while *The Washington Times* (Blake, 2015) reported “phone call” threats and backlash on the social media against Carolyn Walker-Diallo, the first Muslim woman judge in America, as she

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took “oath of office with hand placed on a Koran”. Some eight years back in 2007, similar backlash was unleashed against Keith Ellison, first ever Muslim to have been elected to the United States Congress, because of his intent of taking oath with hand on the Koran, scripture of the Muslims. Ellison successfully silenced the fuss by taking oath on a copy of the Koran once owned by Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of America. “Ellison controversy” had then reminded the nation of Jefferson’s quote from John Locke in 1776: “neither Pagan nor Mahamedan [Muslim] nor Jew ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the Commonwealth because of his religion” (Spellberg, 2013, p. 13). All these controversies accentuated the need of the restoration of the vision of Unity Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) persistently preached all through his life in order to have religious and cultural diversity in America.

They controversy ultimately recalled the vision of Unity that Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) had laboriously struggled to preach all through his life and establish in the religious and cultural diversities of America. Ralph Waldo Emerson was the pioneer of the religious, philosophical, and literary movement of The American Transcendentalism that swept the land of America from 1836-1860 leading to the formation and redefinition of American dreams, lives and ways of life. Emerson was a person “who had something to say about every important religious and philosophical controversy, political and social events and scientific discovery that came to his attention between the 1820s and the late 1870s” (Bosco, 2000, p. 9). He was the American prophet, the one who negated the blind following of the past and present tradition, philosophy, religion and the ways of life and thus contributed to the shaping of the future for the American people. He came up with iconoclastically unorthodox and heretical declarations at a time when America needed just such a prophet.

The young Emerson, however, was looked at with suspicion for his seemingly audacious utterances against the accepted norms, principles and practices of the culture and religion while the mature Emerson was lavished with “all the accolades that the schoolmen had reserved for Aristotle; he was nonpareil, the sage, the philosopher, the metaphysician” (McWilliams, 2011). Emerson’s transition from a “Christian heretic” to “the wise nonpareil sage” is attributed to his eclectic readings of the Oriental texts. His intermittent readings of them during his early years guided him to the vigorously specialized study of the Orient in his mature times. This paper studies Emerson’s maturing life events, some of his essays and lectures and seeks to show that his concept of pluralistic philosophy of religion and culture is impacted by his serious interest in and study of the Oriental texts and scriptures. The study concludes that Emerson’s perception of Unity in the Oriental social, cultural and religious milieu has contributed to the

construction of his philosophy of diversity in America.

## **2. EMERSON AND AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISM**

American Transcendentalism was and still is a tricky term to deal with. Even during the peak time of the movement, there was a misunderstanding of and debate over the term. One early example might be that on February 22, 1839, the *Boston Recorder* published a letter to the editor-signed "Many Enquirer" that began, "Mr Editor, will you or some of your correspondents give to the public a popular and easy answer to the question, What is transcendentalism... few of us can pronounce the word and fewer still can tell what it amounts to" (Dillard, 2012, p.3). The term was popularized by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781. While in *Critique*, the term was used to mean a class of ideas transcending experience, Emerson preferred to consider the Transcendentalist movement as a philosophy that would bring in a bright future: "What is popularly called Transcendentalism among us, is Idealism" (Felton, 2006, p.3).

Hence, the Transcendentalists are the idealists who, in contrast to the Materialists, believed, with Kant and Plato before them, that there are truths that come primarily from intuition rather than sensory experience. The American Transcendentalists asserted that humans' understanding of God came from an intuitive recognition of the inherent truth of his existence, not from external proof. According to Perry Miller (1950), "Transcendentalism was first and foremost a religious movement of self-styled prophets where 'worship remained the controlling motives". Lawrence Buell (1973) defines American Transcendentalism as "essentially a religious movement" and Versluis, 1993, p. 7) finds that "its receptivity to Oriental religions was rooted in reactions against and in an incorporation of Unitarianism and Puritanism, as well as in Platonism, Hegelianism and German and English Romantic interest in the Orient".

Arthur Versluis (1993) further maintains that "the Transcendentalist movement was a product of Unitarianism, Puritanism and other currents of Western thought and also of contact with the world religions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism, which was largely seen in the light of 'universal progress" (p. 3). Channing in his essay *A Participant's Definition* (1852) writes, "In part, it was a reaction against Puritan Orthodoxy; in part, an effect of renewed study of the ancients or Oriental Pantheists, of Plato and Alexandrians, of Plutarch's *Morals*, Seneca and Epictetus; in part, the natural product of the place and time". Transcendentalism was in a sense a journey from Socrates' 'Know Thyself' to Emerson's 'Obey Thyself. "In exploring the role of the individual in a theological sense, Transcendentalism ultimately rejected the need for biblical Christianity, replacing belief in the God of the Bible with belief in the divinity of humanity" (Wayne, 2006, p.vii). The year

1836 is the “*annus mirabilis*” not because the Transcendental Club was formed in the year to bring together the individuals interested in it under one umbrella but because Emerson’s seminal treatise “Nature” was published in the year. The ninety-five-page extended essay provided in its first paragraph a central tenet of Transcendentalism- The spiritualized Nature capable of establishing direct relationship with God: “The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face. . . . Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?” Emerson’s “American Scholar” (1837) is a canonical oration for ‘intellectual declaration of independence’ of America in which he critiqued American scholars for their blind imitation of classical and European arts and philosophies and told them to be “Man Thinking”. In his “Divinity School Address” (1838), Emerson rejected traditional Christian belief in the mediator for God’s grace by challenging the young ministers whether they “dare to love God without mediator or veil”.

Emerson’s First Series of Essays appeared in 1841 with twelve essays. “Self-Reliance” (1841) urges humans to be non-conformist and non-consistent and to “Build, therefore, your own world”. The Over-Soul (1841) liberates human soul from the tradition of yielding to the world as it is part of the Higher Soul and thus it must surrender itself to the will of God; none else. " In ‘History’ (1841), he asserts, “All history becomes subjective; in other words, there is properly no History, only Biography. Every mind must know the whole lesson of itself-must go over the whole ground. What it does not see, what it does not live, it will not know”. After three years in 1844, his Second Series of Essays appeared with nine works. “The Poet” (1844) invokes the image of the artist as prophetic genius who, inspired by a transcendent presence beyond rational understanding, transforms the dazzling ‘poem’ America into a national literature. Emerson gives “fifteen hundred public lectures between the mid-1830s and the effective close of his career in 1870s” (Bosco 2000, p.17) and he comments, “In all my lectures, I have taught one doctrine, namely, the infinitude of the private man”.

In his journals, he criticized the double standard of the American people about religion and comments, "This, the people accept readily enough, & even with loud commendation, as long as I call the lecture, Art; or Politics; or Literature; or the Household; but the moment I call it Religion,—they are shocked, though it be only the application of the same truth which they receive everywhere else, to a new class of facts" (CMN, p.342). Thus, Emerson in his essays and lectures has reasserted one mystery of life-‘the infinitude of the private man’ and this individual value of humanity pervades all religions and cultures from the East to the West. The root of the Truth is also the same though it appears to be emerging from different sources in different religious cultures in various thousand remarkable ways. Emerson’s lifelong journey was to reconcile the diverse, contrasting and contradictory

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ideas and practices through inputting 'Unity of Being' he so laborious unearthed in the Orient and treasured in his philosophy of life and the ways life in America.

### **3. EMERSON AND THE ORIENT**

"For decades Americans have spoken of Emerson as a Boston Brahmin" (Christy 1928, p.38) without much realization that much of Emerson's resources came from the East for even the scholars didn't know about his acceptance of the doctrine of Oriental immanence. Christy (1928) further elaborates, "Emerson's was a true eclecticism, not an agnostic belittling of all faiths or an indifferent borrowing from many, but a clear-eyed, penetrating insight into the things which are the common longings, impulses and discoveries of all men, irrespective of creed or color, but covered up and hidden with much confusing verbiage" (p. 39). Versluis (1993) is more specific on Emerson's oriental borrowings, "Emerson took from the world's religions, on the one hand, ethical strictures and, on the other hand, passages that suggest inspiration or self-transcendence, in a kind of literary religion. This literary religion drew on the world religions and especially on Asian religious traditions" (P.51).

"Emerson's first contact with the Oriental thought and culture shows those same prejudices and misunderstandings towards Eastern culture and religions, which were so common among people of erudition between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth" (Faraone 2004, p.298). Carpenter (1930) notes, "the young Emerson felt both interest in and aversion to Oriental Scriptures' and only later did he turn to them in a serious way". Faraone reports that William Farnham, a relative of the young Emerson, had come back from India and reported to the family the curiosities and strangeness of that country. But Versluis (1993) in his *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* notes that Emerson may have known about the Orient in 1820 as on 10 April 1820, he wrote in his first notations about the superstitions in the East: "It was remarked in the Quarterly Review that as you go west, superstition grows more fanatical and inhuman; i.e. Hindustan is more cruel in her ceremonies and punishments than Egypt and Egypt more than Europe".

On 14 April 1821, the 17 year old Emerson had written a poem for the Harvard College Senior exhibition called 'Indian Superstition' portraying India in bondage to superstitions, cruel practices and fanaticism, entirely under the tyranny of Brahmins. Nonetheless, in the same poem he appreciates India's ancient wisdom, her golden age of the past and visualizes her freedom from British domination. Emerson's letter of 10 June 1822 to his beloved aunt Mary Moody Emerson further reflects his acquaintance with the East, I am curious to read your Hindoo mythologies. One is apt to lament over indolence and ignorance, when he reads some of these sanguine students of

the Eastern antiquities, who seem to think that all the books of knowledge and all the wisdom of Europe twice-told lie hid in the treasures of the Bramins and the volumes of Zoroaster. When I lie dreaming on the possible contents of pages as dark to me as the characters on the seal of Solomon, I console myself with calling it learning's El Dorado. Every man has a fairy-land just beyond the compass of his horizon . . . and it is very natural that literature at large should look for some fanciful stores of mind which surpassed example and possibility (Carpenter, 1930, p. 5). Emerson “read about nineteen articles on India published in the *Edinburg Review* during the period 1821” (Raghupathi, 1996, p.52) and again in 1822, we find the very first lengthy quote from the Indian poem ‘*A Hymn to Narayana*’ in the translation of Sir William Jones:

Of dew-bespangled leaves and blossoms bright  
Hence! Vanish from my sight.  
Delusive Pictures, unsubstantial shews!  
My soul absorbed. Only one Being knows.  
Of all perceptions, one abundant source,  
Hence every object, every moment flows  
Suns hence derive their force  
Hence planets learn their course  
But suns and fading worlds I view no more  
God only I perceive, God only I adore!

On December 25, 1832, Emerson sailed to Europe after renouncing his job of minister at Boston’s Second Church. During this trip, he met, among many others, Coleridge and Wordsworth, two of the English Romantics. This visit had also opened up for him another mine of treasure of the East- The Alcoran. In the summer of 1833, Emerson bought a copy of the Koran at Lumley’s bookshop in Chancery Lane noting in his pocket diary the price for the Quran- two shillings sixpence (Einboden, 2009, p. 1). His meeting with Thomas Carlyle had introduced him to the Prophet of Islam as well, which had a lasting impact on Emerson. The visit to Europe, therefore, had widened Emerson’s acquaintances of the East and thus, on his returning home in 1833, he returned “new man” with new “calling” as he says, “The call of our calling is the loudest call”. He now preferred the lecture hall to the pulpit of the Church for preaching. Between 1833 and 1835, he occasionally worked as preacher for congregations in and around Boston. By 1836, the year of the publication of Emerson’s first work, “Nature”, he had already read “the *Zendavesta*, various translations by Sir William Jones, unspecified works relating to Zoroaster, a number of articles in the *Edinburg Review* and selections from the *Mahabharata*, the works of Confucius, the *Arabian Nights*, *The Arabian Proverbs* and the *Laws of Manu*” (Versluis, 1993, p.54). Jahanpour (2014), referring to Emerson’s acquaintance with Persian poetry,

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asserts that he read the translations of Sa'di, Hafiz and Jami (p. 118). Besides, his family library founded by his father Reverend William Emerson in 1804 had a number of Oriental texts and his university, Harvard, was the home of Oriental learning and thought. The Orient from his early to mature stages of life had thus contributed to the making of a new Emerson. What appealed to Emerson in the philosophy of the East is the concept of unity. His thirst for the Eastern light has turned into a unified wisdom of "likeness to God" in his journal entry at the age of sixty-four when he wrote "Essential Principles of Religion", Can anyone doubt that if the noblest saint among the Buddhists, the noblest Mohametan, the highest stoic of Athens, the purest and wisest Christian, Confucius in China, Spinoza in Holland, could somewhere meet and converse together, they would all find themselves of one religion, and all would find themselves denounced by their own sects, and sustained by those believed adversaries of their sects?

#### **4. EMERSON'S ORIENTAL VISION**

Emerson's lifelong struggles were actuated by his thirst for a vision that reforms and "returns man to his wholeness, his oneness, with the natural world" (Gura, 2007, p.383). The Orient with its treasure of nature, culture and religion was the alluring but practical abode of 'wholeness' of man attained to through the vision of Unity in every aspect of life and the ways of life.

#### **5. CONCEPT OF UNITY**

The sense of Unity is an element of the utmost importance in Emerson's ever maturing thought. His ground breaking maiden work "Nature" (1836) best speaks of unity prevalent in everything of nature. The unity in the elements of the nature makes it beautiful-'Nothing is quite beautiful alone; nothing but is beautiful in the whole' (Nature, 1836). The nature, the beauty in nature, the language of men, the discipline in the varieties of objects and whatever the nature is composed of are the parts of a well-orchestrated unity. Emerson negates the idea of disjointed creations of the things in the universe, "It was builded far from accident". This unity is elaborated in his essay "Compensation" (1841) as the "self-regulating system, physically and morally, in which no single element or act can be isolated from its larger context" (Robinson, 2000, p.163). Emerson asserts that the unity in "the universe is represented in every one of its particles"(Compensation, p.?) and thus the unity is an unbreakable and inseparable "microcosm of the entirety of nature". The Moral Laws" and "The Over-Soul" in *Essays* (1841) articulate Emerson's perception of the unified nature, universe and moral laws. "The Spiritual Laws" points to the automaticity of the responses between the Self and the actions: "We need only obey. There is guidance for each of us, and by lowly listening we shall hear the right word" (CW, p.366).

The concept of unity in Emerson, as Fruzinska (2011) argues, springs from his exposure to and assimilation of the Hindu belief that there is “a universal spiritual entity” uniting all the worlds for “The world is, as it were, an extension, a visible manifestation of the Brahman” (p.63). Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita* elaborates the unity in the universe as having emanating from the Ultimate source, “I am the origin of all; from Me all proceeds. Knowing this, the wise worship Me, endowed with meditation” (Radhakrishna, p.258). To Hellal (1971), Emerson’s concept of unity might have been impacted by the Islamic Sufi doctrine, Indeed, the Sufi doctrine was based on the concepts of the unity of the universe and of the symbolic meaning of eternal objects as means of whereby God manifested his love to man and reminded him of his true nature (p.14-5).

As Emerson had been familiar with the Quran since 1833 “through his purchase of Alcoran” (Einboden, 2014, p.191), his concept of unity might have been influenced by the Quranic assertions of the unified and flawless creation of the universe, He who has created seven heavens in full harmony with one another: no fault wilt thou see in the creation of the Most Gracious. And turn thy vision [upon it] once more: canst thou see any flaw? Yea, turn thy vision upon it again and yet again: [and every time] thy vision will fall back upon thee dazzled and truly defeated... (The Quran, 67:3-4). Fakahani (2007) also asserts that Emerson’s perception of unity comes from the Quranic affirmation of “transcendentalist belief that the world has order and purpose “(p. 295).

## 6. THE SOUL AND OVER-SOUL

The soul for Emerson is at the center of all of his works. “Every sentence, every paragraph, every essay, poem, lecture, or journal note attracts our best attention to the degree that it manifests and promulgates the victory of the Soul” (Bishop, 1964, p.19). Emerson considers the power and manifestation of the power of the soul to be all-pervasive in a man’s life disciplined by the unity of being, The soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light; is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and the will; is the background of our being, in which they lie, an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed.

From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all (Robinson, 2000) Emerson constructed the theory of the soul and its workings on virtue. Virtuous behavior towards others enabled the soul to grow in divine power as he told the Harvard audience, in the soul of man there is a justice whose retributions are instant and entire. He who does a good deed, is instantly ennobled. He

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who does a mean deed, is by the action itself contracted. He who puts off impurity, thereby puts on purity" ( Martin, C., & McCutcheon, R. T, 2012, p. 42) The soul, which is just and pure through virtuous actions, makes itself a grand seat for the Sublime God, the Over-Soul, as defined in the Emersonian philosophy. An individual soul, enlightened by virtue, aspires constantly to connect itself to and be 'One' with the Over-Soul, "If a man is at heart just, then in so far is he God; the safety of God, the immortality of God, the majesty of God do enter into that man with justice" (Divinity School Address). Emerson's the idealistic philosophy of 'soul' and 'Over-Soul' bases itself on the Hindu doctrine of 'Atman' and 'Paramatman' in the Upanishads. According to Riepe (1967), soul refers to Reality and "Emerson himself found in Vedanta an answer to his quest for absolute being as illustrated in the Chandygoya-Upanishad by the dialogue on the soul between Svetaketu and his father" (p.118) while 'adhyatman' in Bhagavadgita easily yields Over-Soul" (p.120). And again, the ultimate end of the whole argument implies Unity in the Emersonian philosophy that reminds us that "the universe, the earth, and all life is One, and because human beings have the capacity to absorb this diversity into a unity, we become, at least in terms of perception, the center of this unity" (Geldard, 2013, p.33).

#### **7. EMERSON'S SELF-RELIANCE**

Emerson's ground-breaking belief in self-reliance is a continuation of his spiritual doctrine of soul and over-soul. The 'tricky to pin down' belief of self-reliance is often confused and thus equated with the Western individualism placing the individual agency and liberty at the center of human actions in the society. Self-reliance in the West calls for people to "present themselves as wholly original, self-contained and independent intelligences" (Klein 1995, p. 29). There it refers to "the products of life like the marketable accomplishments, ideas or knowledge rather than to the process of the life such as doing, thinking, mindfulness" (Dunston, 2012, p.31). George Kateb (2002) considers it "philosophy of democratic individuality" (p.197) and "the soil and fruit and flower of modern democracy" (202).

Green (2019) goes so far as to call self-reliance the motivating factor for "democratic institutions as well as a way of life likely to flourish in democratic regimes attracting people to democracy" (p196). But Emerson rejects the capitalistic conceptualization of individual self and brings in a 'spiritual self' developed by the harmonious interplay of Intellect and Intuition. Emerson's intellect manifesting "itself in the mind through intuitive insight, flowing into consciousness unbidden from within, ...floats an image of truth before our inner sight and, ... we "see" (Geldard 2010, p.25-6). Thus, self-reliance, instead of imprisoning the individual to his own materialistic desires, "retrieves a person from the state in which adult people usually

languish” (Buell, p.77). With “Trust Thyself” at the core of the proposition, the self-reliant unshackles himself from the prison of society because society “everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members” (Self-Reliance). Man must learn to internalize ‘nonconformity’ and ‘inconsistency’ in his individual self for resolving the conflicting issues of the society. An essential man, in disregard to the social customs and conventions of the society and history, listens to the ethically just commands of the soul and over-soul and actuates the divine wills-‘self-reliance for Emerson means the religion of the spirit, the religion in which one is guided by the over-soul’ (Devi, P. 96). Self-reliance, in defiance of society and the state and, in rejection of personal and collective interests, is God-reliance: “Self-reliance was not a rejection of reliance upon God, but rather a reliance upon God rendered interior, personal, and immediate” (Hodder, 1991, p.8).

## 8. EMERSON’S RELIGION

The polls data of the percentage of the believers and the regular church goers might interestingly be significant for understanding the religious influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson over the Americans. Geldard (2010) finds that out of 94 percent of believers, “about 20 percent of Americans attend religious services on regular basis” (p.44). This sharp contrast in the number of the believers and the practitioners show that Americans strictly follow Emerson, “the Father of American Religion”, in having ‘their own personal faith’. Unlike the institutional religion, Emerson’s religion is individual, transcendental, unobjectified, universal and, most importantly beyond any definition in the strict sense of the term. “Religion permeated everything Emerson ever thought or did” (Hudson, 1920, p.203) but he was shockingly termed an atheist after his Divinity School Address (1838) at Harvard for his denunciation of ‘historical Christianity’.

In the address, Emerson rejected the traditional Christian belief and interpretation of the divinity of Jesus calling him a Prophet. “While he showed a reverence for Jesus, he by no means granted him a divine or supernatural character” (Mott, 2015, p.94). Jesus was elevated to and labelled as Man in his sermon ‘Self-Culture (1830) and was “portrayed as a complete, exemplary man, who despite enduring agonies of persecution and suffering, accepted God’s will and thus became history’s great spiritual hero” (Christ Crucified, 1827). But Emerson’s rejection of Institution Christianity of any form is manifested in his resignation of ministry in 1832. Emerson in his 2 June 1832 journal entry asserts, “I have sometimes thought that in order to be a good minister, it was necessary to leave the ministry”. During the 1840s and 1850s, Emerson started preaching ‘a religion of action’ aimed at establishing social justice through morally directed action. The climate of

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social experiment and political reforms in 1840 brought in a change in Emerson's understanding of the role of religion in the practical life of man. He felt the need of a religion actively engaged in the power relations and instrumental to the positive change of the society. Despite Hudson's claim that "Emerson's God-concept is essentially Oriental rather than Christian", Robinson (2000) finds Emerson to have "attempted to forge a universal religion, incorporating the truths from both". Can anyone doubt that if the noblest saint among the Buddhists, the noblest Mohametan, the highest stoic of Athens, the purest and wisest Christian, Confucius in China, Spinoza in Holland, could somewhere meet and converse together, they would all find themselves of one religion, and all would find denounced by their own sects and sustained by those believed adversaries of their sections. (Emerson's Journal, 1868) Arthur Christy, in her pioneering book, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism, a Study of Emerson, Thorough and Alcott*, concludes, 'To Emerson, The Vedas and the Koran were Scriptures just as sacred as the Hebrew Bible'. Emerson himself declares, 'Yes, the Zoroastrian, the Indian, the Persian Scriptures are majestic. Emerson's God, as Professor Buell (2004) notes, is "an immanent god, an indwelling property of human personhood and physical nature, not located in some other worldly realm" (p. 162).

### **9. CONCLUSIONS**

The greatest problem of the world today, as in the past too, is the failure of the people(s) of different religions and cultures to get along and live together with harmony and peace. The problem has recently grown acuter due to the emergence of radicalized fundamentalist groups and sects around the globe who are resorting to violence, armed clashes and rampant killing of innocent people. The world governments have miserably failed to cope with the problem as they have as little patience with, and respect for the religious and cultural diversity as the radicals do. In this world of clashing civilizations, Emerson's perception of Unity gleaned from the Orient and instilled into America might be an active catalyst for opening up a new era of commonalities and reconciliation among the religions and cultures. Emerson's Oriental vision of Unity might again be guiding force for the world humanity to work for common good.

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