

BASIC VALUES VS. RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

No two religions are the same, because no two tribes practising religion are same.

All religious are expression of the eternal spiritual truths. But each expression is suited to the needs of the time at which it was made; suited to the dawning civilization that it was intended to mould and guide in its evolution. But the ultimate aim of all the religions is to bring its civilization into line with the general evolution of the human family.

What makes one religion appear to be so different from the other, is the numerous accretions that get added on to every religion in the course of time. These add-ons are capable of completely obliterating the view of the Basic Common Values in Religions.

So as a first step, one should distinguish the essential from the non-essential in each religion. For this, we can use a yard-stick. Is it ancient, from the Founder's guidelines, is it universal, found under some form in all religions? Usually unessential rites, ceremonies, observance and customs get included in the religion and take on a fanatic character. This should not be forced on others. It has been well-said that 'in things essential there should be **unity**, in things non-essential there should be **liberty**, and in all things there should be **charity**'.

With faith, love and wisdom, we can unveil the common foundation which supports all religions.

All the great Religions and their scriptures come from one divine source.

Self-surrender to God can bring peace to the soul of man.

God is perfect goodness, absolute justice and almighty Power.

God has given man reason and consciousness as a guide towards righteous life.

A ceaseless honest industry, with goodness of heart and truthfulness of mind, devoted to the Lord – this is the true basis of a righteous life.

There is one God, eternal, absolute, revealed through creation. He sends his messengers from time to time to lead his creatures towards him.

In the unfettered form of each religion is perceived the Basic Common Value in its character.

Key Words: Values, essential, love, wisdom, add-ons, evolution rites, customs, god, man, infinite.

No two religions are the same, because no two tribes practising religion are same. But what is religion? All religions are expression of the eternal spiritual truths, but each expression is suited to the needs of the time at which it was made; suited to the dawning civilization that it was intended to mould and guide in its evolution. Even though the ultimate aim of all the religions is to bring its people into line with the general evolution of the humanfamily, yet in the everyday practice, one religion appears very, very different from the other. That is because of the numerous accretions that get added on to every religion in the course of time. These add;ons are capable of completely obliterating the view of the basic common values in the religions. The net result-that which ought to unite has been the ever-springing source of division. So much so that many people over the times and in the recent centuries. have become so frustrated and helpless. that they have shaken off all religions as being man's worst enemy: the introducer of strife and hatred everywhere. But such are a very minimal part of the population of the world, the majority; from alsections of the society-are those for whom Religion is Life, or Life is Religion. Their profession. Their means for bread and butter, their family. their duties, are al not overlooked. Life and its functions are carried out in full, and yet the religious rituals, the daily worshipindividual and social-are observed and carried out as an integral part of life. The faith and belief have been handed down from generation to generation, over many millenniuma. Most of us take it at its face value: not questioning the rationality behind it. Why so? What is it that artracts us in Religion? What is it in Religion that appeals to us? A partial answer may be found in the remark of a psyehologist - "Religion will be there, as long as man is afraid of pain and death." Religion is that unexplained, mysterious support that grants succour to those who are over-ridden by the trials and tribulations of life, and are unable to face up to it.

Clinging to Religion is not wrong, but not realising the similarity in one's own religion and in that of the others is what creates problems. For this. Religion has to be raised from its level of rituals and worship, to the level of Spiritualism or Philosophy. the source which explains the one power behind all. and the divinity of it, existing in each and every creature.

When we go deep into every religion and examine their source, we realise that every religion has evolved from the particular circumstance prevailing, and the resulting need that has to be fulfilled. In every instance, a person having a vision more sharper than that of the group he lives in, rises as the leader.

Actually the various religions of the world are God's answer to the search made through men in whom more of Himself was manifest than is the case in ordinary people. These men are variously called Prophets, Rishis, Divine Men, Sons of God. They may be considered as composing one great Spiritual Brotherhood of God-inspired men, the Guardians and Teachers of Humanity. They put the one Message in different ways, each choosing the way which would most help the people to whom they came.

1. At one time the way was of Duty and Order - (Dharma - of Hinduism). Law, order, harmonious dutiful growth, the right place of each, right duty, right obedience.

2. Beauty was the way of the Roman faith.

3. Another way was the Purity - as in Zoroastrianism. It says stainlessness of thought, of word, of act is Purity.

4. The way of Wisdom is that of Buddhism - knowledge, all embracing, wedded to perfect love and compassion.

5. Christianity talks of self-sacrifice. It takes the cross as its clearest symbol, Remembering that wherever one human spirit crucifies the lower nature and rises to the Supreme, there the cross shines out.

6. The way of submission is that of Islam - self surrender to the one Will that guides the worlds; and sees that will everywhere.

This was as it should be, each having its own path, and practising it to his own satisfaction. For as long as your religion is yours, and mine is mine, and neither claims to impose his religion on the other, no question of persecution can arise

But in this world nothing remains unchanged except perhaps the word or the concept of “change”. From being the support and saviour of Men, Religion became the al and al of life, Religion became the prime aim, around which life was moulded. Ceremonies festivals, fasts, incantations everything multiplied. Mode of dress, eating habits. mode of worship etc. took priority over the source - the Religion. To use a vernacular phrase, “the tail was mistaken for the animal”. To add fat to the fire, the feeling of my religion and your religion arose, and that exploded as the situation that we see today around. And as if that was not enough, the ‘fuel’ of ‘politics’. and the ‘wind’ of ‘power and domination’ has made sure that the fire of ‘religious fanaticism’ and blind faith is kept ignited for cold and ignorant hands to warm themselves, but the fire has started consuming them. Word Unity is broken up by religions and religions are again broken up by sect, for the hatred-mongers to pounce upon them easily. as upon ‘sitting ducks’.

A look at the list of sub-sects of religions is mind-boggling:

Hindus	- Saivas, Vaishnavas, Saktas, Vira Saiva, Jains, not to mention the castes and sub castes.
Zoroastrians	- Shanshais, Kadims.
Buddhists	- Mahayana, Hinayana, Northern & Southern churches.
Christians	- Greek, Roman, non Roman Catholics, Protestants, Anglican Lutherans Calvinists Wesleyans, Baptists, Congregationalists.
Muslims	- Shias, Sunnis and their sub-divisions.

Though many, they are One. Similarly to prove the universality of the truths in the various religions, we can examine the main characteristics of each religion: common symbols, common doctrines, common stories, and common morals.

There is a remarkable affinity to be seen. Jesus Christ and Shri Krishna are very often compared. both were born in secluded places - one in a barn or cave and the other in prison. Christ is violently crucified and Krishna falls victim to the arrow of a hunter.

Symbols are innumerable but the resemblance is unmistakable. The swastika. five pointed star, circle with a point in it, thunderbolt, serpent, dragon. Symbolism is the common language of all religions.

Common doctrines are easily perceptible:

1. The Unity of God. hindu says 'one only without a second'. Parsi tells of 'Zarvan Akarana'. the Boundless. The Jew quotes 'O Israel! The lord our God is One Lord'. Buddhist believes in the one, uncreated, universal, whence creation and particulars come. The Christian says - There is one God'. The son of Islam says - God is God, and there is no other. These statements should normally result in the feeling of Unity amongst humanity. but what man does is to clothe the one great truth in a different dress, and affixes a different label on it, and proclaims his is different, and the best.

2. Trinity of Divine manifestation: The philosophical Hindu says: Sat cit ananda. buddhist tells of Amitabha Avalokitesvara and Manjushri. The Parsi mentions Ahura-Mazda, Spento-and Angro-Mainyush, and Armaite. The Jews proclaim Kether, binah and Chockmah. The Christians have Father, son and Holy Ghost. In the Al Quran are the three attributes - the Mighty, the merciful, the Wise.

3. The Religions by themselves are basically the proclaimers of unity and brotherhood. The following quotations from the scriptures, prove the point:

Hinduism - Bhagavadgita VI. 29. - The self, harmonized by Yoga, seeth the self abiding in all beings, all beings in the self; everywhere he seeth the same."

Zoroastrianism - Patet Pashemani - 'If I have committed any sin against the law of brotherhood in relation to my fathe, mother, sister, brother, mate or children: in relation to my leader, my next of kin and acquaintances, my own townsmen and my servants - then I repent and pray for pardon.'

Buddhism - metta sulta 7,8 -.... Let everyone cultivate a boundless (friendly) mind towards all beings. And let him cultivate good will towards all the world, a boundless (friendly) mind, above and below and across, unobstructed, without hatred, without enmity.

Judaism - XV 7, 8 - If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren ... thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wantet.

Christianity - Acts XVII. 26, 29, - God .. hath made of one blood all nations of men. for to dwell on all the face of the carth ... We are the offspring of God.

Islam - The Sayings of Muhammed p.1. - No man is a true believer unless he desireth for his brother that which he desireth for himself.

Ethics and Morality of each religion speaks of Right and Wrong, which can be generalised as follows:

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| Right | - That which makes for unity by establishing harmonious relations is Right |
| Wrong | - That which makes for separateness, which divides and disintegrates
- that is Wrong. |

There is Diversity, Without difference. The path leading to the supreme is only one, and yet it is many, because every individual has his own path to reach that Supreme.

Conclusion: Religion was a discipline of the tribes. But now it has become a commodity, the marketing of which is a lucrative business, a profession. Once it comes the full circle, it might become for all what it should be - a unifying force of humanity.