

UNIVERSAL VALUES OF RELIGIONS

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The concept 'value' is inherited from economics. Its meaning has been broadened and incorporated into ethics. The Sanskrit equivalent 'moolya' derives from the root 'source' or 'root'. 'Moolya', 'artha', 'ishta', etc are synonyms for the word 'value'. Value, therefore, is the 'worthwhileness of anything'.

Value emanates from the same source of the universe, in a multi-dimensional way. It touches upon the depth, width and height of human life, at one stretch. It is an all-inclusive idea. Welfare of the individual in particular and the society in general is its purpose. Social good or 'wellbeing of the society' is its rationale. Spiritual upliftment is its process. Inclination towards 'the better and the wholesome' is its mark of identity. 'Consciousness of the goal' is its sign of being alive as well as relevant. Value has a sense of 'journeying towards perfection' in life. Value is a 'way of life' for the humans, nay, the right way of living the humane.

Values are human values. They are intended to ameliorate the quality of human life. They are not absolute and permanent. They are not exclusive either. They cannot be so. They are 'inclusive and comparative'. They have two aspects – eternal and provisional. Some values are non-negotiable and some are flexible. They apply to all human beings in a general way and some human beings in a particular way. Emphasis can vary according to communities of diverse compositions, such as country, language, profession, ethnicity, culture, religion, ideology, and the like. All the same, a value is worth its name when it can command 'an intrinsic quality of being universal' in application and acceptance, in terms of its 'ethical and moral implications'.

Universal values of religions are the moral and ethical codes of diverse religious traditions. They teach their respective followers to be good and ethical. Different religions focus different values and they are known by those special values -- Christianity by 'love and service', Hinduism by 'duty' (dharma), Islam by 'faith' (Eemaan), Jainism 'nonviolence' (ahimsa), Zoroastrianism by 'the right path' (Asha), Judaism by 'law', Confucianism by 'ethical code', Buddhism by 'enlightenment', Taoism by 'harmony of the opposites', Shinotism by 'union with the nature', Sikhism by 'considering book as the Guru', Baha'ism by 'unity of faiths', and the like. All those traditions have many more specific values and many of them extend beyond their limits and share values that are specific to other traditions. This is a considerable proof

that 'values are universal in their character', though more or less in degree, and they are not the private property of any tradition.

The universal values of religions are like the many 'branches of the same tree' that receive the sap of life from the same source for sustaining the culture and civilization of the humankind. They are like 'flames of the same divine illumination' that are embedded in the lap of the nature. They are 'one at source'. They are intertwined with each other. They are living symbols of the human aspiration for attaining spiritual heights as well as meaning in life on earth. Religious traditions have to broaden their borders to include, accept and promote the universal human and spiritual values that are present in all the religious and social traditions of the world. They are gracious 'gifts of the same Creator' and are the 'common cultural heritage of the human society'. They are 'guidelines' for all the humans of the world. The universal values are 'ethical light-houses' that facilitate the humans in becoming and living as better human beings. They are the perennial 'springs of human life' that empower the humans to 'keep flowing' towards humane and spiritual altitudes, in order to suit the Creator's concept of life as well as to attain its intention unblemished.

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