

VALUES OF RELIGIONS – VALUES FOR ALL

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People seem to be accustomed to look at religion in terms of this religion and that religion. This could be justified to some extent by the fact that religion in general does not exist. What exists is this religion or that religion, in a particular way. This trend can be supported further by the fact that human being does not exist. What exists is either man or woman. All the same, this separatist thought should not be pushed to such an extent that the idea of religion and human being in general is lost sight of. The idea of a human being evolves from being a man or a woman. Similarly, the idea of religion in general emerges from being part of this religion or that religion. Such a process is the real fruit of being a human being or a religious believer. Processing universal values from the colloquium of religious traditions is a step ahead of the process of conceiving religion out of this religion or that religion.

1. Values

Value is an 'idea of the desirable'. It is the 'quality' that makes something an object of appreciation and respect. It is the degree of 'importance' attributed to something. It is indeed the 'worth' of something. It is the 'theory' that influences the way people assess, select and accept matters. It refers to the principles, standards or qualities that guide human actions. Values are qualities of excellence that prompt a person to do the right thing, without any external pressure. Values are considered in terms of ideals. They contribute to one's integrity in life.

Value can be moral, ethical, religious and spiritual. It can be physical, psychological and intellectual, too. It can be political, economic, social, cultural, artistic, and the like, as well. Besides, value is intrinsic or extrinsic. When things are valued for themselves, like pleasure, they are of intrinsic value. Things are of extrinsic value when they are valued for producing or promoting the intrinsic value, like comfort. Values are subtle and so are exhibited largely through behaviour and are demonstrated through practices. Character and other moral qualities are distinctive of values.

2. Values for All

Values in general are common in their character. They apply to all places, persons, times and situations, though in a more or less fashion. Therefore, they are universal or world-wide. They are mutually inclusive in their nature and so are inter-connected. They make sense to everybody or all in various aspects and almost all, a great many or vast majority, in several aspects. When everybody finds something valuable or holds in common, that is considered universal in value. In other words, they are values for all. All the same, there could be slight variations in degree and intensity with regard to the conscious and explicit expression of anything. When all people have a reason to believe, something is universal. The degree of importance varies according to time and space, as well. Values for all or universal values are the shared cultural and spiritual heritage of the human society.

3. Religious values

Religion coils around feelings and sentiments. Emotions compose an important value in religion. The meaning of the word 'religion' from Latin root 'ligare', along with the prefix 're' is 'to bind/connect again'. 'Getting related' to the Supreme Power and to other human beings is the core value of religion. The two-dimensional relation connoted by religion is integral to human life and that is what is meant by 'faith' in most cases, as well.

The Indian equivalent for religion evolves from Sanskrit 'dharma' and means 'dhaaran karna', which would mean 'to receive', 'to own', 'to feel responsible for', 'to feel bound', etc. It implies 'to be bound by

duty towards one's conscience or the divine power' and 'to feel responsible for one's life and that of others'. Besides, 'dharma' signifies 'duty', 'conscience' and 'nature'. Dharma, in sum, refers to the 'right way of living', 'proper conduct' and the 'the way of the higher truths'.

To say the least, religion is the motivating force in life. It is the source of strength for living one's life and it gives meaning to one's life. Religion is the way one thinks, speaks and behaves. It is the sum and substance of one's experiences, attitudes and approaches. It is the foundational factor for one's life-commitments. One's vision and mission of life are grounded on one's religion. Religion or faith is the powerhouse of one's life. The deeper implications of religion, cited above, compose the religious values, even beyond the limits of all theistic-atheistic and denominational considerations.

4. Values of Diverse Religions

Most of the major values in the religious traditions are inter-related. They have lots of similarities among them. Even many of the values that are specific to different religious traditions do not contradict the particular values of other traditions. They show up different aspects of the value system of human life. The values of different religious traditions have a common origin in the divine source. They have various common characteristics to share among them. They have a common objective of nourishing the quality of human life and of guiding the destinies of all human lives. They have a universal appeal. These universal values of diverse religious traditions are basically human and spiritual values and are oriented to eternity.

5. Values of Religions – Values for All

The values of diverse religions hold distinctive identities that are beyond the scope of being compared. To oversimplify them just as one of the universal values wouldn't be fair to the individuality of the respective tradition. Without doubt, they need to be understood and their spirit has to be imbibed from in a one by one approach. All the same, a value perspective will assist us in joining them with a human and spiritual thread. One could absorb the spirit of another religious tradition without being part of that religion. This is what is really meant by saying values of religious traditions are in fact values for all. The universal values of all religions are to be imbibed by not only believers of all traditions, but also by all human beings, because they are human values.

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