

Religion- The Ultimate Peace for Humankind

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It is not possible to separate man's way of thinking from his way of living and his dealing in life. Man is a wise and understanding being who thinks for himself, wants to comprehend his surroundings and tries to know the beginning and the end of everything, in order to be able to understand the mysteries of the world and the beings around him. He tries to discover the beginning of the world, where it is off to? What is purpose of him in the world? What is the goal of his existence? What will be his end? What actually is the meaning of life? What is the proper way to lead it? Man has always been looking for convincing answers to these questions. The answer to them either leads him to happiness and welfare, or wretchedness and misfortune. Answer to all these and many other questions racing around a human mind are provided by religion.

Religion's answer offers through its call and message, and interpretation of the universe and life an explanation of man's existence, and of his links with them; while the other answer bases its explanation in retort to the idea of faith, denying its reasoning and explanation. Religion bases its interpretation and viewpoint on believing that this universe, life and humankind have a Creator, a Lord, a God head; and that man's existence on this earth is neither a meaningless and aimless one, nor is it a random happening. Life and man have their goals and values exceeding the time span of man's existence on the earth's surface. He has a supreme objective to pursue, embodying it through his attitudes, his deeds and his general activities in a world that goes beyond perception and the time spent in this world ⁽¹⁾.

It is very hard to find out the definition of religion as it varies with the ideology of each group or person. No one can be said to have accurately defined religion and "since ancient times there has been discussion on whether "Religion" comes from "relegere" "to read again" or from relegare "to bind".

Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines Religion as, the personal commitment to and serving of God or a god with worshipful devotion, conduct in accord with divine commands esp. as found in accepted sacred writings or declared by authoritative teachers, a way of life recognized as incumbent on true believers and typically the relating of oneself to an organized body of believers ⁽²⁾.

The Oxford English Dictionary expounds on religion in this way, Recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control

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of his destiny, and as being entitled to obedience, reverence, and worship; the general mental and moral attitude resulting from this belief, with reference to its effect upon the individual or the community; personal or general acceptance of this feeling as a standard of spiritual and practical life ⁽³⁾.

The combinations of all these potential definitions give rise to the idea of religion being an ideational concept. Although it is innate in each human being, the approach towards it varies from person to person. For some, there is only One God whereas to others, there will be many or none at all. However, the concept of Supremacy and Ultimate power remains attached to the concept of God-lines along with certain rituals and practices that presumably bring the person closer to God. Altogether, the entire concept of religion gives each man a reason and way to live.

Religion is a law inseparable from man's nature just as the laws of physics and life are inseparable from matter and living beings. This is because the Creator of the world has given man the longing for his Creator and directed man towards Him.

"Then set your face upright for religion in the right state - the natural disposition..." ⁽⁴⁾

James Linden in his book 'Fundamentals of Religion' shares the same thoughts as above; Men have always felt a need for religion and found value in it. So closely is religion interwoven with the life of man on earth that we may say that religion began when man began. It springs from his very nature and evidences a new growing out of that nature. Not only have men of all times and in all places been religious, but history bears witness to no truth more striking than this, that religion has been one of the most important factors in raising man to the degree of civilization which he has at present attained ⁽⁵⁾.

In the same way, the author of Britannica Encyclopedia writes, "Man it has been said is incurably religious. This is an epigrammatic and slightly facetious statement of the most impressive feature of religions" ⁽⁶⁾. Allama Iqbal in his renowned book, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* stated, 'Religion is not a departmental affair; it is neither mere thought, nor mere feeling, nor mere action; it is an expression of the whole man' ⁽⁷⁾.

The exact same approaches can be strengthened by the very renowned belief that one needs to look at the 'God' of the civilization to judge its credibility and potential. I believe it to be very true since it is natural that when God exists, He will have to reveal a way of life, i.e. religion for the people He has created. And such a religion should be so inherent that each individual can readily relate to it throughout his/her life. Moreover, the religion should guide men in

every sphere of life and answer to each call and query. Altogether, the revealed Divine help and law would have to remain unmatched and prove to be a guidance for the people for the most ideal standard of living.

Every religion has at least some of these elements: rituals to perform, formulas to recite, tales to narrate, objects to manipulate, places to frequent or avoid, holy days to keep, natural phenomena by which to predict the future, charismatic, leaders to follow, truths to affirm, a literature to ponder, precepts to obey. Very tough they undoubtedly do in content, most of these elements are sacred to most religions, and the study of religion must consider all of them and more ⁽⁸⁾.

Religious feelings typically involve a sense of sacredness, awe, and mystery. It most intensely may be evoked by the numinous experience of a holy being. In many phases of religion the most important concept is the mystical quest for insight and the discovery of the ultimate within the believer. Both the sense of dependence on an outside power and the search for meanings within involve and experience of communion with what is sacred or ultimate. Such experience gives believers strength in dealing with the more serious circumstances of life. Much of religious rituals are aimed at communicating with those powers that significantly control human lives ⁽⁹⁾.

Here, it is essential to point out that the need to associate with religion and have certain ritualistic practices is indispensable to life. A life void of it misses out on a major part of life experience as it remains devoid of spirituality and longing to belong and associate. This reminds me of my daughter's meeting with an atheist, a person with no belief in God/gods. The atheist had no sense of self and led a meaningless life. Most of the time she was desperate and desolate and it was then I felt that she had nothing to associate to with. She neither had any religion nor any rituals to perform which left her with a very mechanized life. It was then that my daughter advised her to belong to a certain religion where she had a sense of self and community and achieve the sense of inner self through spirituality and connection with God/gods.

The best way of interpreting the need of religion is that want of a strong relationship with God. For understanding, we take it from the very beginning when there were only Eve, Adam and God along with other creatures like angels etc. That was the time when they had direct connection with God, this relationship needs purity of heart. Now a days purity of heart is extinct that's why relationship with God is not direct as it was in older days. The religion gives the concept of prophets who guided mankind to maintain connection with God ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Religion stresses on the fact that ultimate shelter of human beings is with God's relationship. As cited in Bible,

“Save me o God because I have come to you for refuge. I said to him “you are my Lord! I have no other help but yours”⁽¹¹⁾.

In the Holy Quran Allah says:

“Verily those who says our Lord is Allah and remain firm (on that path) on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve”⁽¹²⁾.

The imperative nature of this belief is that one attains peace with the circumstances when his/her faith in God remains deeply rooted since he/she can judge that the ultimate power and destiny remains only in the control of the Divine Power and His refuge can solely provide peace, serenity and courage.

Religion depends upon beliefs. Belief combining with culture becomes religion. Religion defines the ways to spend the life. It becomes a complete code of conduct for humans. It provides the pros and cons of life's ups and downs. That's why basically we need something that shows us the path we have to lead in life. This path is shown by religion definitely. It is religion which arouses the importance of action in human life. In any religion beliefs and practices are compulsory components. For instance in Webster's dictionary the definition of “Religion” is a specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects⁽¹³⁾.

To sum it all these criteria of religion up, the true definition can be provided by the Arabic word “Deen”, “way of life”.

Syed Ameer Ali has discussed five principles which base upon the true crux of Religion;

1. A belief in the unity immateriality, power, mercy and supreme love of the creator.

2. Charity and brotherhood among mankind.

3. Subjugation and the passions.

4. The out pouring of a grateful heart to the giver of all good;

5. Accountability for human actions in another existence⁽¹⁴⁾.

These above mentioned principle go on to show that the religion binds a human society to strive for goodness and the fact that they are answerable to the creator which results in every man to be conscious of their acts.

After a thorough study of the Holy Quran, the traditions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), and the biographies of his caliphs, we come to the conclusion that religion is indispensable to politics, and a state cannot have a healthy, substantial and practicable constitution and administration without the full co-operation of religion. There was a perfect, peace, equality, contentment, fraternity, mutual love, sympathy, and good administration during the age of the Holy prophet and his Caliphs because they did not separate religion from

politics. Rather, religion was a dominating power during the first century of Islam, and Muslims enjoyed the benefits of a true democracy. When religion was separated from politics by some corrupt rulers and dictators, innumerable evils crept into the Muslim States and there began a decline and downfall, which does not find its end even in this age ⁽¹⁵⁾.

Renowned scholars irrespective of their religious affiliations still acclaim the “deen” of Holy Prophet (PBUH) to be infallible as it had both secularism and religiousness combined in such a way that the society progressed at the fastest pace. It is believed that had Holy Prophet (PBUH) been the ruling power of today's world, each nation would have been progressing more than the other as concepts of morality and human rights would have been so ingrained in the society that a way out of them would have been impossible. It is because of that that Holy Prophet (PBUH) with his “deen” has remained on the top of list of the most influential men in history.

A Comparative study of Islam and other Religions by Professor Muzafaruddin cites, Religions are introduced by God in order to lead mankind to eternal blessings. Their objective is worship of God as well as management of worldly affairs so much so to establish a composite state and government on the fundamental principles of religion is also included in the scope of the religious mission of God ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Not only does our Islamic heritage stressed on the fact that religion cannot be separated from forming a government, or from politics or forming a stable society, other notable people from other religions have stated so.

Washington in his Farewell Address left his country a precious volume of second counsels that have been instrumental ever since in promoting the best interests of this nation. ‘Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports....In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who would labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens’ ⁽¹⁷⁾.

Mr. Kenneth writes:

“Religious system can also provide human service professionals with models for the development of communities” ⁽¹⁸⁾.

The vitality of a society, a people or a civilization depends in a large measure on the philosophy of life conceived and practised. It is religion which provides high standards of a civilization. Generally world religions particularly Islam has laid the greatest emphasis on the concept of unity. It is not found there, however, merely as a concept among concepts but as an all pervading principle which governs all the fundamental domains of human faith and action which signifies that religion plays an important part in uniting the people.

Religion emphasizes that human is an organic whole. Dr. Fazal-ur-Rahman writes:

“The human being is a unitary being, with the soul, the mind and the body and their different dimensions of existence and behavior, forming an integrated organic whole-a unity”⁽¹⁹⁾.

Islam does not bifurcate the unity of man to an irreconcilable duality of spirit and matter. In Islam, God and the Universe, spirit and matter, mosque and the state are organic to each other⁽²⁰⁾.

Religion most importantly should not divide life into water-tight components of matter and spirit. It must regard life as a unity and stand for life-fulfillment. The study of religion must foster tolerance towards other beliefs and the people who professed them as Islam teaches since the best way of life is to live as an organic whole. This points out another important factor of existence of humanity – living together as a community and fulfilling the rights of others since it is the only way that your rights will indirectly be respected.

In Religion all men are equal, whatever be their color, language, race and nationality. It addresses the conscience of humanity and banishes all false barriers of race, status and wealth. There can be no denying the fact that such barriers have always existed and do exist even today, in this so called enlightened age. The final religion Islam removed these entire impediment and gave the idea of entire humanity being one family of God.

Famous Muslim poet Dr. Iqbal says:

“If the Muslim will prefer pedigree to their Religion, they will disappear from the world, just like the dust of the way”⁽²¹⁾.

Brotherhood is an essential constituent of the Muslim faith. “Zakat”, “Fasting” and “Hajj” are the indispensable articles of faith that inculcate the spirit of humanity in all the muslims. Each individual has certain rights and duties that have to be fulfilled. Such fulfillment promises a thriving spiritual and worldly life. If any of these criteria are not met, like Dr. Iqbal said, the muslim faith will fade away.

It is religion which guides humanity to obey God’s orders and creates a sense of accountability among them. As it is stated in the Bible:

“As the time of king David’s death approached, he gave this charge to his son Solo man, I am going where every man on earth must some day go. I am counting on you to be a strong and worthy successor. Obey the laws of God and follows all his ways”⁽²²⁾.

In present world, religion is the need of humanity, because it promotes Science. Dr. Maurice writes:-

“It is a fact that there is no writing belonging to a monotheistic religion that condemns science. In practice however, it must be admitted that scientists have great difficulties with the religious authorities of certain creeds. For many

centuries, in the Christian world, scientific development was opposed by the authorities in question, on their own initiative and without reference to the authentic scriptures. In actuality, religion enhances the development in science and paves an important path in its progress⁽²³⁾.

If analyzed, Islam as a religion promotes science and science proportionately advocates the truth and perfection of Islam by approving what occurs in its scriptures. Today scientific discoveries regarding the existence of universe and its laws do away the falsehood of polytheism and shirk away the claims against Islam and its scripture the Holy Quran. As said above, God said that He would reveal Himself through His signs in humans themselves and nature. This is exactly what science is doing today- finding and discovering God in every aspect of nature.

Religion helps mankind spread awareness about their future and remove the quizzical queries of death and happening after it. Unlike other religions, Islam draws a fine line between life here and Hereafter. The should and should not's have been clearly elucidated on in its scriptures and the model life of Holy Prophet (PBUH). A thorough comparative analysis of Islam and other religions shows that only Islam proves to answer all questions regarding life, the way to lead it and finally its end. A. K. Broohi writes:

“One must labour here-below in order that the life which is better and eternal may be attained in the hereafter. There is, in Islam, no such thing as the winning of the hereafter at all possible by neglecting the claims of this life. Islam is therefore an amelioratistic religion⁽²⁴⁾.

Furthermore, religion saves people from evil and bad ways. We know religion to be a message of deliverance, a call to salvation and luminous sign on the dark road. Its purpose is to save mankind, to break the bonds of slavery and open the channels of light and a happy life before a straying humanity.

Islam has done so too by bringing into limelight all the aspects of life. The Quran clearly and quite efficiently points out what has to be done and what to be avoided. The practicality of it was projected by Holy Prophet (PBUH)'s lifestyle and his rule and conquests over lands. The same idea occurs in Holy Quran:

"Those who follow the Apostle-Prophet the Ummi, (one who neither reads nor writes), whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel (who) enjoins them good and

forbids them evil, and makes lawful to them the good things and makes unlawful to them impure things, and removes from them their burden and the shackles which were upon them; so (as for)

those who believe in him and honor him and help him, and follow the light which has been sent down with him, these it is that are the successful"⁽²⁵⁾.

Muhammad Saeed Abdul Rehman's quotes in his book the eternal and ever need of religion in the most beautiful way, 'It is impossible that the idea of religion could diminish, because it is the most refined inclination of the soul and its noblest emotion, in addition to being the inclination that ennobles man. Rather this inclination will increase and the religious nature of man will remain so long as he retains that reason which enables him to distinguish between beauty and ugliness. This instinct will increase according to his level of rationality' ⁽²⁶⁾.

Conclusion:

Religion presents to man a correct explanation of his existence, and gives him a lasting vision that plucks out the roots of his doubt, mental anxiety and fear of perishing, losing, and uselessness in this life. Thus, by this explanation, religion opens to man the door to the expanses of life. He then organizes his life according to a perfect and unified ideological basis, taking him

to results and objectives in life free of disorder, contradiction and objectives in life free of disorder, contradiction and disappointment. It offers him, besides other things, a sound ideological program, perfect in its order and movement, leading him to understand life and to adhere to a defined and explicit conduct. To sum it all up, we see that religion is an inherent and innate characteristic of a human being. He/she is born with that connection to God, the Creator which however in some cases is maimed due to intervention of cultural practises.

Instances are the man-made religions such as Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism, etc. Although they do not fully refute the concept of Unity, they neither accept it fundamentally, thus creating a rift between man and God. With such a difference, the spiritual questions are left unanswered and soul faces an eternal thirst. As opposed to the monotheistic religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism) such problems can be easily avoided as the Unity of God remains a manifest truth. No matter how impressive and attractive the atheist, materialist schools of thought may be, and no matter how many ideas and theories there may be, individuals and societies can never do without the true religion, they can never answer the needs of body and soul. The further the individual sinks into those ways, the more certain it becomes that he cannot find security or quench his thirst, and that there is no way out except through the true religion. Thus we may conclude that following the true religion – that which is based on belief in Allaah alone (Tawheed) and worshipping Him in the way that He has prescribed – is an essential element of life if man is to be a true slave to the Lord of the Worlds, and to attain happiness and be free of tiredness and exhaustion in this world and in the Hereafter. It is essential in order to perfect man's rational thinking. In this way alone can reason fulfil its desires; without it man cannot fulfil his higher ambitions.

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