

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN RIGHTS AND FAITH VALUES -A UNIVERSAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Since the last decade of Twentieth century and inflaming at a rather large scale in the Twenty First century, the whole world is engulfed by chaotic religious and non-religious turmoil. The basic universal human rights, ethics and essential values learned socially and through religious faiths are globally in peril. A critical review of authentic religious literature (original scripture) excluding preaching, teaching and interpretations by various religious people, does provide a ray of hope that universal understanding of human values can find solutions to global conflicts and bring peace to the world.

INTRODUCTION

Almost every human being having some sense of global events particularly social and communal conflicts is aware of the geopolitical turmoil effecting whole humanity. The wars against terrorism in the Middle East, ethnic cleansing episodes of Rwanda and presently in Kenya, and, nations preparing nuclear weapons are all murdering humanity. The most pathetic aspect of chaos in the world is loss of respect for human rights and human values. To protect humanity from complete devastation it is imperative that the intelligentsia of the world comes together and find some workable solutions. It is essential for scholars of religious and non-religious back grounds for the sake of goodness in humanity to develop mutual understanding and give priority to peace in the world.

GLOBAL CONFLICTS

To understand human unrest in the world, it may be of help to consider some contributing factors, such as;

1. Global economic imbalance. Generally speaking the poor, weak and have-nots always look at the rich, prosperous and having it all with contentious intensions.
2. Dominant nations can be greedy to have more and impress upon others their dominance for example Rwanda episode, Kenya, Bosnia-Serbia etc.
3. Unfair International politics, global ecology and natural resources.
4. Unfair means of the weak such as terrorism and wars.
5. Social problems - drugs, alcohol, pornography, same sex marriages, sexually transmitted diseases, e.g. Aids.
6. Natural disasters - earth quakes, tornados, stormy weathers—Katrina in New Orleans, USA and Tsunamis in South Asia, and wild fires etc. etc.
7. Most dreadful are the on-going wars between nations like Palestine v/s Israel, or religion based conflicts against other religions or even among different

denominations of the same religion. Episodes in Iraq, Iran v/s Iraq. Hindus v/s Muslims, Christians or Sikhs.

8. Sex differentiation, especially in education. Even today, in some countries policy of keeping girls out of school was based on a very strong cultural prohibition against having women mix with unrelated man.

CONCEPT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND ITS ORGANIZATIONS

The human rights of freedom in thoughts, expressions and actions are most important aspects in progress and in social and communal developments. The two words, 'love' and 'compassion' are part of the daily sermons in every religion. The 'nature' having the God merged in it obeys the laws of the universe except the human being - an independent thinker and doer. As long as the human obeys the laws of universe and enjoys the faculties blessed upon him/her to live in the 'will of the God', the world is a wonderful place to be. But, from the times immemorial history of human kind is pathetic. The prophets like holy Moses, Jesus Christ, Honorable Mohamed, Gautama Buddha and Guru Nanak have tried to teach valuable ethics and rights for a peaceful, brotherly and compassionate living. The authentic holy scriptures (not interpretations of the religious contractors) are all witness to the peaceful, loving and compassionate sermons.

But it may be injustice not to say that as institutionally Europe and USA are making so very important effort to improve 'Human Rights' in constitutions. The United Nations Charter (1945) grouped religion with race, sex and language, and required all signatory nations to pledge to promote human rights with distinction as to these four. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on (1966), together called the International Bill of Rights, followed the same approach, adding the fight to freedom of thought and conscience to the conditions which may not be made the basis for any invidious discrimination. In November 25, 1981 UN General assembly reached a consensus on the 'Declaration on the Elimination of All forms of intolerance and of discrimination Based on Religion and Belief. But that was only an article for informal agreement and common aspiration [1].

The World Conference on Religion and Peace held its first Assembly at Kyoto, Japan in October 1970. Its concern has tended to parallel those of the United Nations, with an emphasis on the need for disarmament, development, protection of human rights and increasingly on preservation of the environment. Following this Conference, there were held many more such conferences in Belgium, in 1974, in Kenya in 1984, in Australia in 1989, etc.

We tried to present institutionally ties between religion and human rights. But it is not mean that many people are pleased with religious phenomenon. On the contrary some reject traditional authority. To many, religion is a term which implies extremism, fanaticism and obscurantism. At the same time, as across, there is a hunger for spiritual reality and a different style of life-to be seen in the interest in meditation, yoga and new forms of religious feeling [2].

In all frankness, I would like to say it is time to answer a few important questions as human beings:

1. Is anyone listening to the answers of religion?
2. What is good for human beings in social events?
3. What is the relationship between the good and religious belief?
4. Someb are asking 'is there any future for Human Rights related with the religion? But I would like to ask is there any future for faiths?
5. And, would some superior universal values - as human rights find solution to some global problems without feeding from faiths?

ETHICAL VALUES BASED ON RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AND NECESSITIES OF ETHICS

Somebody argue that one of the central global forces in seeking to create what is perceived to be higher personal and public morality is, of course, religion [3].

Almost everybody knows that the ethical values play a major role in shaping the life of an individual and communities in general. It is the responsibility of the religious mentors, individuals and social groups to make informed decisions based on ethical values. Depending

upon the motives of the facilitators (in most cases—religious mentors) the society can function together and enjoy living or exhibit friction—animosity, fall apart—kill each other etc. It is very important to re-evaluate religious motivations, human rights and ethical values to understand not only to avoid future conflicts, but to find workable solutions and achieve some harmony in humanity.

In this presentation point which we emphasis it, all kind of ethics needs a source that feeding from deep psychological necessities. And you can call it 'Soul' or 'Spirit' or 'Faith' or 'Values'. Some argues that a renaissance has begun about the Spirituality. *'There is a spiritual renaissance sweeping the world...It is a revolution in the way we think* [7]. And some suggests that 'we reclaim our souls. Instead of dying and oppressing the soul we can learn to let the soul manifest itself in the world. Instead of confining the soul, we can learn to celebrate soul [5]. And according to Moore: soul is not a thing, but a quality or a dimension of experiencing life and ourselves. It has to do with depth, value, relatedness, heart and personal substance [6].

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS BASED ON FAITH VALUES

Mr Smith in 1979 described it well in the Journal of Faith (Faith and Belief) when he wrote, " And faith is a quality of human living, at its best it has taken the form of serenity and courage and loyalty and service: a quiet confidence and joy which enable one to feel at home in the universe, and to find meaning in the world and in one's own life, a meaning that is profound and ultimate, and is stable no matter what may happen to oneself at the level of immediate event. Men and women of faith face catastrophe and confusion, affluence and sorrow, unperturbed; face opportunity with conviction and drive; and face others with cheerful charity [7].

It may be better to understand the terms 'religion' and 'Faith' as described in the dictionary. The Webster's English Dictionary defines: 'A system of beliefs and practices relating to the sacred and uniting its adherents in a community.' 'A person's expression of acknowledgement of the Divine.'

And 'Faith' is defined as - 'complete acceptance of a truth which cannot be demonstrated or proved by the process of logical thought.'

The human accepting faith in religion can certainly develop ethical values and feelings for society to have life with meaningful purpose. However, the beliefs in faith and practices in uniting communities together can help develop workable solutions by the religious and non-religious scholars.

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universal acceptability. Similarly, if the representatives of other religions put forward their principles for the evaluation of their universal acceptability by the Joint Committee of representatives of all the religions, then they should sit together to recommend universally acceptable ethics to be followed by the whole humanity. This would be first great step forward to the establishment of fellowship of the humanity by resolving our differences and hatred then peace can easily be established on this Earth. Ultimately it would result reduction in the expenditure on arm race. The saving thus accrued could be spent on science and religion to exploit their potentials for the welfare of the humanity. Consequently, the humanity can easily be saved from its extinction from the atomic warfare and can live peacefully forever.

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Mr Fowler in reference to the person's faith wrote, "Faith is a person's or group's way of moving into the force field of life. It is our way of finding coherence in and giving meaning to multiple forces and relations that make up our lives. Faith is a person's way of seeing him or herself in relation to others against a background of shared meaning and purpose." [4].

We see different kinds of religions practicing various components in variable forms, whereas people of faith having close relation with the transcendent have universal character to understand and unite with each other. Similar to bipolar character of the Faith, religious history of the world reveals us that the religions also have double power. They can unite the groups or societies or separate and divide them mercilessly.

Still, the faith and religion have the power to unite the people together around the same central ethical values. The faith is not just for religious rules, at the same time belief to some basic ethical values.

Faith means to believe in freedom for human beings from the all kind of dishonorable situation for own and the 'others'.

Faith means also to be responsible for the 'others' and 'own' now and future. As is summarized by Blitz [2]. This kind of responsibility helps to produce and establish the qualities it takes to be free to succeed, to be an individual whose choices and actions are un-mastered and unconstrained. And I argue that responsibility arising from faith looks for a common good. And genuine

responsibility is not counter to, but, rather, flows from a deep grasp of one's self interest.

And as saying Paul Tillich: *Faith is an 'Ultimate Concern'*. And *Faith is courage to be as human being mutually towards God.* (Tillich, *Courage To Be*)

It is our responsibility as scholars of religious studies to find solutions together so that humanity can be saved from becoming its own enemy.

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